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NO. 2

A Royal Aeireess

BY
EMILIE
EDWARDS



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A ROYAL HEIRESS

PHOTO
GROVER

Faithfully Yours
Emilie Edwards

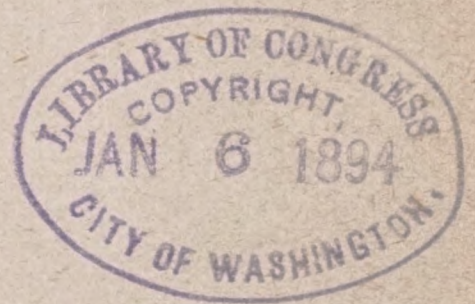
A ROYAL HEIRESS

OR

A YOUTHFUL ERROR

BY

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EMILIE EDWARDS



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To one who first inspired me with hope and confidence;
sanctioning that encouragement with a staunch sincerity of friendship, leading me to higher planes of endeavor and reflection, I dedicate, with deep gratitude and respect, my first novel.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

People who write will usually tell you that they had something to say and said it.

To have something to say is common, easy, we all have that.

To say it, the best way, that is correctly, is difficult, very.

Truth is everywhere around us, some of it is here.

E. E.

A ROYAL HEIRESS

CHAPTER I.

Not to speak of the weather would be an unwarranted slight of conventionality; an unnecessary one, a surprise to many, perhaps a disappointment to some, therefore, I shall speak of it.

If complacent in aspirations to originality, one would not, nevertheless, make so daring a departure as not to do so.

We expect, rather like a book to begin with the weather, and indeed what is more important; it determines our actions, often motives in life, governs and colors our spirits largely, and may not the kind of day descriptively given, sometimes be taken as a prefatory to the humor or temperament of the heroine? It seems a pleasing fancy to me, to be introduced to our leading character on the manner of day that might mirror her own nature.

Should the sun be blazing unabatingly down on a stifling July day, the numerous insects buzzing a contented symphony of peace, we would certainly expect a warm-natured, warm-hearted, languishing and indolent beauty, with the very sunniest hair and bluest eyes whose perpetual expression would be a

smiling "Is that so, love?" sort, who would say, "No," with her lips, "Yes, and Kiss me," with her eyes.

Leisure-loving, social, care-hating divinity, who idly scoffs at a lecture on the proper distinction between some folks and some people, with but little thought, a character developing by the circumstances of its daily life, its motive or method of action or caprice, as the life drama flows on its erratic course.

Onward, and with such natures often downward, finding their eventual vindication through the apology of friends, in the "emotional stress of a peculiarly organized temperament."

But the world's excuse is, "wayward and undisciplined creature who lacked the stringent guiding hand of a practical and experienced mother."

They feel all the good things of this world were mostly made for them, and their smile is sufficient recompense to receive them.

A cold, blustering, storm-brewing day, with the king of our system hidden far from sight, a hastening blue-faced crowd with gasping breath and numbing fingers, causes us to frame in fancy a somewhat turbulent and aggressive spirit, one whose glance means something, whose smile is not an acquiescence, and whose words we listen to in a subdued or respectful silence. Nothing commonplace or meagre here, this is one on whom destiny places the incidents, nature the force of genius, to confer or convey a new character or phase upon every stage of existence.

The soul of a martyr, permitting no latent lying gift of energy—the spirit of a Corday, in love, the

devotion and courage of a De Lavalette. Yet, ruled by faith, blessed by prayer, won by valor, true to death and through eternity.

An autumn day made beautiful by a flashing sun, and the soul inspiring grandeur of dying foliage.

A little frost, a little breeze, a dashing girl, a hearty laugh, a buoyant gait and sparkling eye. Looking for fun, life, song, and happiness, meeting all in joyous or disdainful glee which does not to her happy heart contribute. Merry child, pure blossom of nature's true emission. No studied folly of the times.

A jewel whose brilliancy and sparkle is all its own, whose worth we all must value, and gladly give whatever she may ask, her very spirit is the happy compensation. It has been a little cloudy this afternoon. The sun peeped out but hid again at once, as if to say, "I saw a good deed just then, but let me hide, a multitude of evil ones will surely follow."

There comes a spatter of rain, impetuous for the moment, now it has stopped almost cleared, but no, it still remains gray, quiet, and serene, suggestive of a grave inquiring mind that does not look to the smiles and light of life to find its truest joy or best fulfillment.

Nor has she, this girl, a handsome thoughtful woman of twenty-four, arrayed in an armor of common sense against conventionality, and at war with the scruples evolved from old time fears, she yet transgressed no law of right.

The day was indeed emblematic of her soul as she had known it. Calm and pensive, and too grand to

be unacquainted with tears, not knowing itself as we shall see, but burning with the fervid heat of progress, and the rights and hopes of all. Holding in that busy brain thoughts not generally accepted, earnest in following all works of literature, striving to penetrate to the base of all.

Looking at every side, sometimes praising, often condemning the strong, and the unjust power which gave the original, and still fosters that false but established strength.

Beautiful beyond comparison or conception, the most perfect ideal of the noblest type of womanly beauty.

Could one refrain from loving her, they certainly could not restrain an overwhelming admiration for her great loveliness.

But with her acquaintance must surely come both love and admiration.

And now as her blooded steed starts out in the brisk unflagging gait her firm hand accustoms him to maintain, his dilated nostrils, proudly arched neck, graceful and spirited mein, all bespeak the joy he feels in bearing the weight of his precious and loved burden.

Horses love us. All animals love the gentle hand of kindness and protection.

They form their intuitive likes and dislikes as we ourselves do and how many horses I and you have seen that carried their pitiable experiences in their faces; docile, gentle creatures, subject ever to ignorance, cruelty, drunken frenzy, or maudlin barbarity of inhuman mankind.

Handsome Regina Claremont settled into the saddle with the calm determination to enjoy.

What a picture they made, this stately animal and his graceful rider, and as they passed down the circling drive to the western boulevard, old Heywood as he slowly closed the swinging lodge gates behind her, bowed low down with the inculcate spirit of true humility as he said, "God bring you home safe, Miss Reggie." And in that confident, fearless voice of strident independence, she answered kindly, "Restive will do that, Heywood."

CHAPTER II.

He shook his head slowly, he thought it was all in the hand of Providence. This old man worshiped his young mistress, and her strange ideas caused him many a serious muttering.

When a child, she would spend hours in the garden with him among the flowers; he had been the gardener at Brightwood for many years, until his age made the duties too arduous, then the old couple were placed at the lodge, and Betsy knitted her stockings, he smoked his pipe, and life for them sped on in a routine of monotonous calm.

He now thought of the many remarkable questions she would ask him, when but a little child, questions he could not answer.

He didn't exactly know why he had not a right to some of the good things of this life, but he would certainly not presume to think that he had. Sometimes running along the boxed walk, or behind the hedge, her apron filled with bright fragrant blossoms, another little face would peep in from the outside, a little thing like herself and though not asking, look in mute appeal, and with a half shy moving away manner, so characteristic of the little ones of plebeian association, when near or looking at the prosperous or rich. How many times Regina would call after

them, he could see her now, her sweet pretty face pressed to the rustic bars of the fence and her voice once more as a child, saying, "Come here; come here, little girl; haven't you any flowers at home, do you want some of mine?"

Giving them all away, that was her greatest pleasure, a soul gushing even then, with generosity.

Coming up to him she would ask, "Why don't they have flowers, Heywood?"

"Because they are poor and have no garden or grounds, and live in a little house owned by a rich man," he would answer.

"Then they have no house, or garden, or flowers?"

"They have nothing, my child."

"But why? why, Heywood? We have everything," she would add almost wistfully.

The old man was thinking this out to himself now, as she rode away out of sight. Then he wiped his cheek and cleared his throat, saying, as if to himself, "God bless her dear heart."

This November afternoon the dampness of the air freshened and dyed her cheeks, until they glowed with the voluptuous crimson of the rose. Regina was an only daughter, an only child. She had those peculiar gray-green eyes we search the world to find, opalescent, at times, almost transparant in their thoughtful purity.

Possessing that singular directness of gaze, itself an added charm to their radiant hue, changing with a thought from the shade and beauty of a gray pearl, to the midnight blackness of starless night. Her

fine dark hair coiled in the smoothest of knots. No rebellious curls or fluffy disorder betrayed a hasty or studied negligence of toilet. All was in place just where it should be, no crimps, frizzed or singed bangs, burlesqued the soft curls of nature.

Here there were no curls, no attempt at any, her fine thick tresses glistening in their well kept and compact quantities, were indeed a true exemplification of a woman's crowning glory.

How her eyes shone as with head proudly, almost haughtily erect she faced the sharp breeze.

There was no indication that she felt it, and she didn't, for the habit of her life was a cold morning bath, always preceded by the pliant, corsetless exercise which gives full freedom of grace and perfect circulation. How the blood leaped and responded now to the healthy exercise, caused by the horse's action.

How free she felt, how brave and fearless in thought or spoken word.

Had one said to her, "You look a veritable queen," she would have ignored the comparison in utter silence. She was the peer of any who lived upon the inherited privileges of power, and knew that loyalty within, could alone beget a royal heart.

Born amidst the very conditions her present ideas wholly repudiated, she was of course compelled for self protection to submit to the environment.

She knew that ownership widens personality, gives power to work and carry out its will and, since she was destined to live under a system, she felt blessed in the almost limitless wealth which alone made it possible to do much good.

One evening in a burst of zeal, she had all the servants gathered in the drawing-room, where she delivered an oration on the ideal constitution embracing universal equity.

Being young, she advocated that all men were born equal, forgetting that practically, the brain makes that an impossibility.

Standing amidst these descendants of penniless, ignorant, downtrodden victims of superstitious royalty ridden countries, overworked, underfed, degraded through poverty, from lands where the universal surplus of anything is erroneously supposed to be population.

Here in her glorious beauty and eloquence, she talked to these benighted beings of equality. But they had not fairly reached the first strata of understanding, and analysis was many generations ahead.

Among themselves later they talked in whispers.

They were born to service, their parents were servants for generations before them, and naturally they inherited the slow-coursing blood of servitude and submission.

It is not so much the blood of birth and ancestry that makes us, but that whole-souled, heroic defiance, and ability to subdue conditions when not too strong, nature has planted in the breast of many of the most humble.

The history of the great, is but a record of the poor.

Reaching the far stretching line of the boulevard, Regina drew lightly on the rein. Immediately a slow canter followed the former pace.

Without turning to the right or left, she knew they were passing in the vicinity of much genteel poverty, much refinement and outward show of ease, but ah, the heartaches at the demands of custom, the headaches, over the plannings to conceal

Though coming out for the run, which in itself she so dearly loved, this studious, gentle girl must ever sink into the contemplation habitual to her.

She no longer thought of herself or her intended pleasure.

Just here a beggar has nearly fallen or been thrown under her horse's feet, in his earnest efforts to attract her attention.

Would she, this proud looking, elegant lady from the class that indirectly breeds such creatures, stop to aid him?

Yes, and with the silver, a kind word.

If he were unworthy those words of sympathy, the heart feeling they conveyed, gave food for thought, and would awaken any lingering spark of manhood, but if worthy, how well was she or are we all repaid, for a word of kindness to the miserable.

A lingering spark of manhood did I say? that was wrong, manhood or womanhood seldom dies, it is wretchedness that overpowers it.

"Have we grown wise in civilization?" she said to herself.

"Are we civilized?" a curious sort of an expression played around her lips.

Patting her horse's neck she talked to him as to one of her kind, and he, if not an intelligent listener,

was at least a silent one, and he softened his gait to her gentle tones as they passed through the wooded lanes and winding roads, far into the country, miles away from Brightwood.

CHAPTER III.

"With all my wealth I scarcely know how to do much good, this constant patching is not aid."

"How very rich I am," and looking up she knew the vast tract of fertile acres she was now passing would some time be her own.

"Ah, Reggie, my pet," her father had said to her a few days before, "Reggie, my girl," he repeated, looking at her wonderful eyes whose mystic shade recalled to him vividly at that moment her dead mother's, "you will be a great prize for some lucky fellow one of these days, eh, sweetheart; but what will your old father do without you," he added playfully.

"Don't, father, I shall never leave you," there was no smile at the allusion of a lover or husband.

To her, love would be a serious encounter when met, and that too whether slowly grown, or instantly kindled.

Her love would contain the elements of a tragedy, undying intensity.

Of a depth and resolution that would rise or fall by the conviction of heart alone, capable of every sacrifice but honor.

Life would be nothing.

Not her riches, her vast possessions, but herself would be the treasure for that "lucky fellow," and no

one knew it better than her indulgent and doting father.

Another time he asked if she feared a fortune hunter might win her love, her answer was attended with the smiling disdain that marked her whole character when referring to the follies and hypocrisies her open nature so thoroughly despised. "When I meet the man I love; papa, that man will not question whether I be rich or poor. And," she ended, "let us hope it will be many years yet."

And laying her head against his shoulder, added: "I only want my own dear father's love."

This was but a few days before. Fate, fate! how fantastically, nay, cruelly you sometimes beguile your helpless and ignorant children.

If any one could have whispered in her ear as she rode through the lane now, "The time has come, you will meet to-day, 'tis destiny, and unchangeable. The paths will cross and intertwine for good or ill, to end as one or two but time alone can tell."

How amused she would have been, cynically smiling in unbelief.

The curling up of the corners of her mouth would doubtless be her only sign of derisive incredulity. If any expression of language aroused her sarcasm, it was this hackneyed one of "meeting one's fate." Her eyes had never sought a lover, her heart had formed no ideal, she had known no fitful passion, no balked or thirsty sentiment. Not a throb within her breast, no subtle stirring had moved the placid waters of her life.

General Claremont and his daughter were unusually dear to each other, it could be noticed even in their daily rides together, that being a pastime of which they were both equally fond. They made a most attractive pair, his snow-white hair and dignified bearing; her noble and magnificent beauty, and his heart would swell with honest pride at the many glances and flattering comments her lovely face would constantly elicit. And after a sharp run, they canter up the drive, and he helps her down telling her he is proud and happy to be her father, and she adds, "If you but had a son, I a brother, would you not be happier?"

At that reply, a cloud would pass over his face, he would quickly stoop as though to adjust or examine the stirrup, thus concealing from his quick-eyed daughter the expression of pain his strong will would fail to entirely control. An anguish born perchance of some hidden thought or bitter memory, which would not have failed to arouse the closest questioning had her earnest eyes ever perceived it.

Raising his face at such times, there was depicted a suffering that a student of human nature would attribute to but one cause, remorse. Could this man of unimpeachable honor have ever been guilty of a deed in early life, at anytime in life, the far reaching and evil consequence of which sap in eternal regret the healthy springs of life, that wither and stunt through self-condemnation and a hopeless agony, the highest aspirations of the soul. Has this noble man whose proudest boast might be his stainless

honor, as proved by years of a daily life of spotless virtue and goodness, even been guilty of a crime, a relationship productive of evil, a liaison encouraging a folly, an offense or misdeed of any nature that might in future years rise up no spectre, but a vivid and terrible reality the evil results of an early and serious indiscretion, that awakens in the night and tortures it's victim with a poignant and unceasing grief, a living, ghastly, never-ending horror of shame, memory and remorse? Yes.

I have said this father and child were remarkably near to each other.

Her own private fortune, free accession to his, not a wish half ventured, ere it was complied with, life gives no more.

The keen nature of their attachment was no doubt largely due to the early and untimely death of Regina's young mother, when the child was but five years of age.

She was also, as could be seen by a large picture in the gallery, a woman of great beauty of face and figure. Her fleecy draperies in luxurious transparency scarcely concealed the outlines of her perfect bust and shoulders.

A deplorable, cruel accident had been the cause of her sudden and youthful death. Her husband's pistol was on the bureau where it had often lain before; this morning, it was always supposed, she picked it up carelessly striking the hammer, or was idly examining it and thoughtlessly pulled the trigger, at any rate it was discharged and the terrified occupants

rushed to her aid, but to see her final gasp, and silent death. She never spoke again.

It had been a cause of much sorrow to the general that his wife expired during his absence, and this shocking calamity overwhelmed him for a time, years, but as his little daughter grew to resemble her and developed her graces, air, and manner, he sought to be reconciled to his great loss, and in the complete affection and companionship of his child, soften the decree, and bury a grief, if never lessened in its nature, might in the performance of all the duties towards the living, make him bear it less wholly and selfishly in his thoughts.

We should not grieve too long or desparingly, but believe they are gone to the fulfillment or perfection of a higher destiny, the wisdom or purpose of which, we may not now hope to know or understand.

The night Regina was born, the general, then a man of forty, sat by the bedside of his wife, holding her hand in tender encouragement.

During the lulls of peace they discussed the expected heir exhaustively.

Certainly it would be an heir, for Helena Claremont in the fixed belief that the mental wholly governs and subdues the physical, closely followed every rule, and performed each condition, determined that nature whether or no, should stamp her patent of sex in masculinity, on this child.

But nature was ironical in perversity, and treated her subjects with the usual disdain of absolute power.

They exchanged hopes and opinions regarding his health, appearance and pursuits.

The general, like a happy school-boy, planned his occupations and pleasures, he should be an ideal son.

"He must be called after you, dear Reginald;" said the wife laying her hand softly on his arm.

"Yes, yes, as you say, sweetheart, but he must look like you for none are fairer."

In the morning the nurse held towards him a bundle of lace and flannel, which she specifically announced with the indifference of professional brevity as—"A girl."

Their disappointment was great indeed, but soon forgotten, the mother often declaring that she blessed the day her self-imposed task of sex creation had proved a failure.

And so, the Reginald that would have been, became Regina, and as her father noted her growing charms, maturing intelligence, ready thought and wise convictions, there lingered no shade of regret in his heart, this girl had not been born a boy.

Often in the quiet evenings her father would look up at the likeness of her mother and relating some incident of their happy married life ask: "Reggie, don't you recollect such and such an occurrence?"

And she would reply, often with tears in her beautiful eyes, "I can only recall when I fell from Salmon Jack, the little yellow pony you first brought me, a lady in white seemed to rush towards me, but I cannot remember her. Ah, if I only could. Sometimes there comes to my mind a vague something that takes no definite form. It is not a memory, more a lingering phantasy a faintly recurring, far-away

shadow of a dream, an unconscious recognition of a former impression. I feel I retain the memory more perfectly than I recall it. I can only regret, revere her loss, I never felt her love, nor can I truly say I feel or ever felt her loss; for you, papa, have been father, mother, all to me, cease to grieve and let me comfort and be all to you."

"And so you are, my child," he would answer with a deep sigh. "My all, myself, and not a part of me."

In this house, guarded by the most indulgent parent, cherished in the tenderest love, was she reared.

It was a grand old place, of massive dimensions; its gables and towers made one think of an old castle, impressive in its grandeur to those born to a lowlier destiny. It might from its structure have figured in olden story, and held captive in its gloomy towers some beauteous and pining maiden. Yet with all this magnificence of ownership and power Regina battled with a constant and farreaching discontent, for she looked upon her life as useless, in spite of all she was daily doing, weighing steadily upon her mind amid this fountain of plentitude, through no reason save a loyal sense of right, were cherished the undying principles of opposition to, what she seriously considered, the evils and tyranny of wealth.

CHAPTER IV.

"Oh," she was now saying to Restive, with her thoughts deeply buried in the problem, "that there should be such a word as 'charity!' that there should be an enforced condition that entails or accepts it! How I hate the word for the ineffable suffering its very name conveys. Justice, only, is the living watchword of the human race," she cried aloud, and her voice sounded sweetly musical amidst the natural silence of the surrounding hills.

It was growing late. Suddenly coming to herself she straightened up in the saddle, and glanced around. Thinking to give her horse a brief breathing spell she drew rein.

They were miles from home on the verge of a dense forest; how she exulted in the privilege of loneliness, it vibrated through her heart with a joy inconceivable to the bustling pleasure seeker, or the worldly worn. The leaves as they whispered in loving and rustling contact, gave forth a sighing cadence that quivered through her every nerve, then soothed her back to gentle peace.

From the south now came a warmer breeze, bearing upon its wings light vapor that flecked the whole sky and became roseate in hue, when the sun touched with purple light the summit of the hills far above

the surface of the river, from which, in morning's dewy light, went up in myriads of spiral threads, a mist, softly as a spirit, that quickly melted in the ray of the day's first beam.

Now she slips from the horse, and stands silently by his side.

He wanders a few steps away then, reaching up, bites at the fast withering leaves on the trees. Early autumn is so artificially beautiful. The city lay far away to the south-west, the great city of New York.

She turned her thoughts from its painful misery and crime, to the sweeping Hudson that gleamed like a broad ribboned sash of silver through the trees here and there far off to the west.

Miles from Fordham.

Our heroine was born but a short distance from the famous spot where dwelt that restless and afflicted soul, who penned, "Once upon a midnight dreary," and passed through the heavy shadows into silence.

Standing on a slight elevation, nature, grand and solemn, inspired her soul with awe. Her thoughts crowded thick and fast upon a vivid imagination, wandered almost without purpose over the whole visible universe and her own relative littleness in comparison.

"Here am I," she said, her eyes raised to the sky which had now cleared, the day going out in all the splendor of a brilliant sunset's dying glory, "trying with a finite mind to grasp the infinite."

A few stars were now beginning to show themselves, although it was still day. "If we could but leave this

planet" she mused, "visit those sparkling units that rivet, dazzle, fascinate us, but scarcely reward our curiosity and search for truth. Who can attain truth with mortal's shaded senses? Oh heart and life!" she cried, raising her empty hands and clasping them on the pommel, her whole attitude and manner betraying an eager inner search for the outward and responsive truth.

Strange words she then repeated. It seemed as if the door long sealed within her soul was now about to loose its iron bands.

"Empty heart," she said, "with its minimum of struggling knowledge, could we but understand the universe!"

She believed she understood herself, her natural bent and one desire, the mind's unvaried longing.

"How gladly would I die to-night, if all could taste through that, the draught of perfect freedom."

The rays of the sun fell aslant the dappled chestnut steed, and his shining coat gleamed with the lustre of satin.

She passed her hand slowly over his noble flank again and again.

This mistress of the world's best gifts, as reckoned to-day, was happier in this solitude, her horse an only companion, than as the feted belle in the drawing-rooms of the rich and great.

Now, for the first time in her twenty-four years, she experienced a singular emptiness of heart.

Restive turned his head at her soft strokes.

"What are you thinking of, my pet?" she whispered.

Her own thoughts had dropped from the sky to the mysterious and curious phenomenon of mental action. The wonderful laws of association, the subtle changes and quick flashes of wit and fancy, the curious play of volition, the impulse of desire, the unexplained mysteries of lights and shadows that come and go upon the field of consciousness.

For these phenomena of the inner life there are no charts or diagrams.

"We may discover new arts and sciences, new stones and metals," she mused, "but who can discover a new passion."

And with her thoughts so engrossed the lovely eyes changed from their gray transparency to black, far away they looked, as if seeking to traverse the mighty depths of space they had a few moments before so seriously conjured upon.

Again she repeated softly, "No one can discover a new passion."

She sighed, one to see her would question if she were in ecstasy, grief or despair.

At that moment the sound of flying hoofs reached her ear, a man passed rapidly, twenty yards away. He wheeled around and approaching the silent girl, raised his hat saying, "Anything wrong! In difficulty?"

She looked up into his face, his eyes, which looked back at her a half smiling interest, a face on which were indelibly stamped character and pride.

Hair just tinged, as he lifted his hat, one could not fail to note the slight wave from the temples.

A close trimmed beard, untouched by the hand that

had lain its finger on the brow. Young? to an experienced eye possibly thirty-one, no more.

The vigor of a well-bred youth betrayed itself in every action.

She did not reply.

It was natural he should feel perplexed for a moment at the silence, but he readily continued:

“Seeing you dismounted I thought”—then he stopped; the conclusion of the sentence was to have been—“it but a duty to inquire”—but he never finished those words.

What strange sweet thing was borne upon that mutual glance!

With a visible effort Regina now answered him: “There is no trouble, nothing the matter, I was resting my horse and—thinking.”

Without removing her eyes from his face,—she could not, magnetic, noble, as it was,—there started from his glance a strange, stirring, something of response in her heart to impressions not formed into thoughts in no degree, yet realized by herself.

He was gone.

She had indulged a day-dream, and she awoke from it with feelings of surprise, interest, joy and pain.

She sought to penetrate the gathering gloom that had so quickly hidden him from sight. Indescribable emotions thrilled her to the very core of her being; he had come so suddenly upon her, so suddenly disappeared, it could not be reality.

Yet recalling his fine presence and figure, almost military air, firm seat, and perfect freedom in the

saddle, his noticeable refinement, all attested to her confused and wandering senses, that the experience was no delusion. What could it be, a new world had opened to her eyes, her very soul seemed shaken.

The damp approaching gloom of the woods sent an icy chill to her heart.

"Shadow! Phantom, it cannot be reality."

Restive nibbled at her sleeve.

"Ah, Restive," she cried, clinging around his neck, "what is this new light which stirs my heart with such ardent feeling?"

She herself believed yet, she was the sport of some fantastic vision.

But no! he was now too firmly implanted in the tissues of her brain.

For the first time she had met a man upon whom she did not look with an indifferent eye, a man that compelled an involuntary, a deep-rooted kindling of sensations no heart can fathom or pen describe.

The tones of his voice came pleasantly to her ear. Half dreamily she turned the horse's head towards home; half unconsciously, half aloud she murmured: "Who can discover a new passion?"

Hastily collecting the reins she sprang into the saddle, gave Restive his head, and in a few moments the forests of upper Fordham were left far behind.

On with the rapidity of the breeze flies her horse, on with the speed of lightning fly her thoughts, perilous, uncontrollable.

"No new passion," said those thoughts, and her heart beat faster and faster,

"No new passion, no new passion!" flashes from her brain in metred rhythm to the horse's pace.

The blood now rushes through her veins like living flame, what means this warring contradiction of heart and mind.

What has happened to her, where is her accustomed calm, her old grave feelings, that heart that had never yet wavered in its direct perceptions What meant its wild unruly throbs?

It seemed to her so unaccountably moved that she could hear its beating high above the flying feet of the leaping steed whose empty and resounding clatter now awakened a hundred reverberating echoes on the hard asphalt pavement of the broad and dimly lighted avenue.

The stars appeared in myriads. In this strange intoxication she seemed within the sphere of heaven.

A hoarse vibrating chime struck seven, its harsh tone jarred her slightly, an inarticulate sound from her lips as they pass an old familiar turn.

Faster and faster by the houses growing thicker, faster and faster towards the home growing nearer! A little farther on they reach the knotted elms, a clump of old intertwined trees which were ever signalled as a near approach to Brightwood.

They are on the last quarter, like a bird suddenly let loose in joyous freedom he courses on, past a stolid policeman wearily standing still, by a bewildered lamp-lighter who stares in some alarm, past some gaping visitors who gaze in silenced fear, they dash furiously on up to the gates of Brightwood. A

moment's pause to gather strength, a mighty leap, he clears them well, alive to the spirit of the deed, he continues his mad gallop, up the drive, past the house rising gloomy and austere in the gathering darkness, by, almost over the dogs, barking a glad welcome, up to the very stable door.

Without a second's pause, slipping from the saddle, she lays her hand upon the horse's chest, as though to feel his temperature, a few gentle pats, he rubs his velvet nose against her soft cool cheek. She turns away.

Slowly starting for the house, a short distance, a long snorting breath reaches her ear, pausing she calls in a voice, she cannot recognize as her own, "Treat him extra well to-night, Jesse, he has had a hard run."

CHAPTER V.

"I should think he had," was Jesse's mental reply.

"Tired, ain't you, old boy?" he said, as he carefully rubbed each leg.

One of the carriage horses neighed in friendly welcome, Restive answered, then showed his teeth and laid back his ears in playful fierceness.

Though playful, his spirit often needed to be kept in check, and on the road required the guidance of a practiced hand of skill, he was not a "lady's horse."

With the great St Bernard, Dombey, yelping and leaping around her in excessive demonstration of joy, Regina walked hurriedly up the path across the lawn, to a group of trees which concealed a rustic seat.

It was dark and damp, but she had forgotten that.

Throwing herself with a long trembling sigh on the seat she tried to think.

Her throbbing temples and troubled heart prevented it.

Partly realizing protection from the damp earth necessary, she raised her feet, and placed them on the warm body of the affectionate dog who had stretched himself on the ground before her.

She could not adapt herself to the proportions this pretentious spectre had assumed within her breast.

What we are ignorant of, is most difficult to comprehend.

This obvious and convincing change in herself was almost a mystery of horror. Pressing her burning hands to her head, her heart, then she sat bolt upright facing herself as it were, determined to look squarely and honestly into her jumping and terrified heart.

In a voice faint and sinking to an inaudible whisper, she said fearfully to herself "What is it? What has come to me; this is a fatality I cannot alter. What ails me? Speak! speak, my heart. What has come to you?" and the answer seemed to come from that heart whose best light had hitherto been somewhat obscured by a sturdy reason, not before allowed to analyze its own inward structure, it now spoke, "Do not question me, you cannot, I am no longer here, no longer yours, this agitation, this almost sickening, yet happy pain you feel is but the bursting of the shell, the bird will find its mate though sometimes long in seeking."

The inner voice had ceased.

Who was he? How was it, they had never met before, her whole life had been spent among those old hills.

A stranger, he showed in that meeting of a moment the culture of foreign travel.

Would they ever meet again?

His image now rose to her mind in perfect distinctness of outline.

"Can this be the love brought in an instant to life,

I have ever so contemptuously ridiculed," she whispered doubtfully to herself. "Is this the sentiment I have called absurd and unnatural, whose only existence was possible in the imaginative brain of the vulgar and sensational novelist? Has this love come to me, to me, who hitherto found the only joy in dreaming of the revolution of nations and the redemption of the world?"

There was a swishing gliding rustle at her feet, then a little further off, a snake hurried away among the dead dry leaves.

It was time to go in.

Rising she crosses the lawn, Dombey close at her heels, she dropped her ridingwhip but didn't stop to pick it up, probably didn't know she had dropped it, possibly didn't care. A beautiful full moon, she didn't see it, a dog bayed in furious clamor from a neighboring estate, it did not reach her ears.

They enter the side door, no dreary space of cheerless dimensions reaches the eye, but on every hand soft sensuous luxury. Reaching the great oaken stairway she is proceeding to her own apartments, when the patter of Dombey's feet on the polished floor of the hall falls on the ears of General Claremont who is comfortably reading his evening papers in the drawing-room beyond.

"Reggie, are you there?" he called.

No answer.

"Reggie!" again he repeated.

The patter of the feet died away, the girl had heard nothing, the voice of that dearly loved father had failed to break the spell.

Reaching her own room she touched a silver bell.

"Macie," she said, "heap up the grate, make a blazing fire to-night. I am cold, freezing," and a shudder shook her whole frame. All her former fire had departed, she trembled from head to foot.

Soon the sound of crackling flames and flying sparks broke the unusual stillness. Dombey lay contentedly on the ample Lybian rug before its warmth.

Macie silently removed the closely fitting habit, and boned waist—the beauteous outlines never having been defiled by heath destroying monstrosities of vanity and ignorance—and placing a soft woolen dressing-gown about her mistress' fair shoulders, retired.

Regina, though in the habit, and preferring to perform those little offices for herself usually, yielded this evening without a protest.

She was alone, rising quietly she slowly crossed the room and locked the door, then turning, she threw herself full length upon the floor beside the sleeping brute, and gave herself up to the impassioned relief of tears.

Aware of her weakness and folly, she yet sobbed on. Dombey, dog-like, sniffed at her hair, then tried to push his nose between her hands, to show his sympathy. But such nonsense could not last long.

"My will shall always govern my emotions," she had been fond of saying.

"Yet I do not know myself now," she thought, sitting up and gazing with eyes that rivalled in their burning depths, the fire before her. "I have lost my force of reasoning. I who have lived in the path,

willingly, voluntarily walked in the sombre plodding steps of judgment, gilding no recollections of the past with a coloring not their own, anticipating and hoping for the future emancipation of thought, and freedom from the bondage of error.

"Ever foremost in my mind, 'what might be,' I like a weak creature who never had a thought, natural or acquired, sink down before this mighty power of imagination. Have I been wrong in my reasoning, mistaken conceptions for realities only to find in this the one reality?"

"Who can discover a new passion," came slowly almost defiantly to her mind, and aware if there were no new passions for the world, there were for the individual, she arose as one who had been vexed by a doubtful problem, but had found its true solution.

She seemed held in a spell of infinite magic. Standing silently in the center of the room she stretched out her arms as if the dawning knowledge of truth intoxicated her. Insensible to all but the stirring ecstasy of the moment, unseen, except by the great eloquent eyes of the dog, she felt a settled calm steal over her. A long sigh of happiness, a smile of half satisfied yearning. The struggle was over, the anguish abated, the mind composed. Love was born.

CHAPTER VI.

That sigh seemed to be the acquiescence of a contented and willing submission.

A radiant expression of joy lit up her incomparable beauty.

Her lips opened and closed as if one second to let her secret fly forth to the world, and the next shut it fast within her own breast.

Should she tell her father?

Her thoughts halted in doubtful meditation, no fear of opposition, but more through a consideration of wisdom, would she at present remain silent.

They might never meet again, at that thought her heart contracted in unspeakable pain. They would meet, they must, would he love her too, would he think her fair?

Tender and expectant heart, he could not do otherwise.

The girl looked around, this was the room left but a few hours before, with her heart full of bitterness for the wrongs of races, the unfeeling arrogance of wealth, the tyranny of power.

On this very rug she had stood, how long ago? glancing at the Dresden clock, it that moment sounded eight.

Five hours only, it seemed years to her, she was

another being, surely another woman. Looking around at the profusion of rich tapestries and silken hangings embroidered in silver and gold, the Turkish designs of fabulous value and beauty, splendor that would have enchanted and held speechless and fascinated most any beholder unaccustomed to them. But of all this she gave no thought. Years ago, she had read a story, a love story, that bristled on every page with adventure and heroism, and it was of its title she now thought.

“My Love and Noble Lord.”

She recalled no part of the tale only the title. She commenced to dress humming an improvised air to herself, these words fitting themselves in a hundred variations to the melody.

Over and over again, while her face grew bright and happy, she was swallowed up and lost in the light of this great love, and thought of, desired nothing but its consummation.

“Why think of the misery of the world; can I alleviate it?” she said.

“No, such stern thoughts but murder joy and banish peace, I cannot change the world, an approach to my fond dreams of the past are at best but a far off reality. Ages after we are dust many see the enlightened thoughts of reason gain a foothold, not before. No, I will live for—him.”

To live for duty is doubtless noble, but love is the best good, I must be loved and love as others do, to reap from life its brightest blessing.

What is this extravagance of decoration, these

ponderous ornaments, and rare mosaics, what are riches, honor, fame, the world or life, compared to love; naught, that is all.

Let those in humble homes with love be glad, for that is king of all the treasures God bestows.

Now she is all animation and song. A hasty douche, a smoothing of the raven braids, a passing glance in the mirror.

Will he love me? When shall we meet again?

Donning a plain dark-green silk dinner-dress with flowing laces at the throat and wrists, and fastening a little brooch of pearls at the neck, she trips lightly down to dinner. How often her happy laugh rang out, the merry toasts she gave over their wine. Never had her father seen her so blythe. She had dropped the serious moralizing tone habitual to her. In the drawing-room, she picks up a book of poems, reading a passage here, a measure there, then getting up walks about, a restless nervous air pervades her whole demeanor.

At length going to the piano, she idly turns the leaves of a folio, running her long fingers lightly over the keys, and turning the pages, she is about to sing, yet sees nothing that just pleases her humor, but now, ah yes, "My heart," her clear mezzo strikes out with all its cultured tone and beauty, her whole soul in the words, "My heart feels a new born emotion it never has known before."

"You never sang so well, Reg," said her happy father.

"I never felt so well," answered the girl dreamily.

Ten o'clock.

"Good night, father."

"Good night, my darling."

As she closed her eyes to sleep one could have heard in a low tone coming from her lips "My Love and Noble Lord."

CHAPTER VII.

The next morning the recollection of the meeting of the previous day crowded with a hundred doubts into her mind. She was not so sanguine nor so happy as she had been the night before. What was his character? what was he? who he was, amounted to little, what he was, everything to her.

How high bred and handsome he looked as he rode away.

"Oh, I will not think of him," she cried impatiently, and springing out of bed took her exercise and bath and descended to the breakfast-room.

The birds singing as she entered, awakened the most pleasurable feeling intensified by the presence of love.

After greetings, the general said:

"I have by the morning's mail a note from a gentleman who has thus far lived on the continent, but has decided to settle here and devote his time to the breeding of blooded horses."

"English?" asked Regina.

"He doesn't say," replied the general.

"Bertrand Eltham, unusual name, Eltham."

"Yes, but don't you recollect we met a family by that name at a spa, three seasons ago? There was no son, however," added the girl.

Then reaching out her hand for the letter, a chirography we are apt to associate with a staunch business method met her eye. "He says little of himself," she continued.

"Yes, merely mentions letters of introduction, among them one for me from Major Alton, at present in England, you know," replied her father.

"He has taken Baisley Place, why that is only six miles from here, he will call in a day or so. Well, Mr. Eltham, call when you please, we will receive you with much ceremony, eh, papa?"

"Do you feel a curiosity to meet him, Reg?"

"Knowing me, papa, what do you think?"

"Well, you are twenty-four, and I want you to think of these things more, you will need some one besides your old father and the children down there one of these days."

"What do you mean, papa? I shall always have you!"

"I know, my dear, but—"

"Don't, *don't*, father, we *know*, but none of us will believe. We cannot face it, till it comes."

"Well, well, daughter, don't let it worry you. I am sturdy and cannot complain. I am sixty-four, still many a man lives to be ninety. I have been thinking though, of this baby business of yours, and it causes me much uneasiness. Now, now," he said, raising his hand, as Regina was about to speak, "I have never thwarted you, Reggie, in anything; but these ideas of yours are not to my liking. I don't want to interfere and I won't, but when you talk

about adopting these children without parents or name, I question the issue most seriously and feel great uneasiness, for their tendencies will in spite—”

“Father,” said Regina, with the old tone coming back to her voice; “don’t you think children imbibe from parents through precept and habitual association, tastes, tendencies, prejudices and talents, rather more than is bestowed by hereditary transmission?”

“I do, and the deep interest I feel in these children, ‘waifs,’ ‘unfortunates,’ as you call them, partakes of the nature of a scientific research, and confirmation of truth, as well as the great desire to benefit their lives.

“We know them to be of various nationalities, let us see if the traits of blood assert themselves, or they prove amenable to the teachings of a pure and disciplined home. For only discipline, imitation and pride makes humanity what it is.

“Are we not liars? Certainly, since we must place our hand upon a sacred book and swear, make ourselves liable to law, before we are believed.

“Are we not thieves? Yes, since we are constantly making bolts, bars and keys with which to protect our valuables. Are we not murderers? since the most stringent laws and almost certainty of detection, does not prevent men from this awful crime. We are oppressors, cruel and unjust to the full extent circumstances allow, yet we are christian, not pagan. We advocate and believe in the divine doctrine of mercy.”

“Of course Reggie, a certain class—”

“Oh, papa, class, class! what is it? I speak of the

natural man. The savage, the thief, the liar, the murderer, all these are the *natural* man.

"He is restrained by what? the laws firstly, association, culture, pride, selfishness, some men are too selfish to be criminals.

"Yes, culture is the engine of destruction to crime, remove this, and you will have retrogradation to the primitive. My dear, but awfully prejudiced, papa," said the girl jumping up from the table and going up behind, putting both arms about his neck, laying her head with its raven braids on his snowy hair, "what if you had sometime, now try and take such an incredible circumstance to yourself, what if you had when young and not given to serious thought of consequences, as thousands are daily doing, betrayed a girl or any"—at those words General Claremont gave so violent a start, that his daughter paused suddenly, and tried to look down into his face, but he held her hands which were clasped around his neck tightly in his own for the moment, then said in as natural a voice as he could command:

"Well?"

"A poor girl," she continued, "who would of course become an outcast without friends, maybe without shelter, the greatest sufferer in every way, but not one half the sinner. Most men will add to the crime of betrayal, the coldness of indifference and the cruelty of desertion. Unless through the moral suasion induced by looking into a gun barrel in the hands of an irate father or brother.

"In her despair, this miserable creature may be

victim of innocent confidence, may be not, any way she is wretched unhappy and unfortunate.

"She is met by a girl, one of her own sex, near her own age, with a true woman's honest feelings.

"A girl whose whole life has been surrounded by watchful care and loving guidance, hemmed in by all good influences and taught the gigantic fallacy of class distinction, as an actuality, apart from human derivation, a sort of divine bestowal on a favored few. So sheltered had she been, temptation was, for her, almost an empty sound, and error an idle jest; yet with this false grounding of what is true in life, her own heart fearlessly speaks, she pities, and does not condemn her fallen sister. What would you say of this girl who takes the less fortunate one by the hand, ignores the false line society has erected for the woman, not saying "I will use 'my influence' to get you into some charitable institution, the place for such as you, but takes her by the hand as a sister indeed, trying to apply literally the words 'do unto others,' etc., gives her a home, helps her through the trial, and starts the life of the child amid conditions and advantages which will in most cases insure its own reward.

"Of this girl who should by her teaching and station believe wholly in the half bugbear 'heredity,' but who does believe and know, that by familiar contact with crime, we all would learn the vices of civilization and not its virtues, or rather our natural self would find expression, though we be the offspring of what is called the noble and great. Now, what would you think of *this* girl?"

"What would I think of *this* girl?" he answered, drawing her down to his knee, "that she's an angel, God bless her beautiful face!"

"And that's what those girls said, minus her 'beautiful face,' and the prayers offered up in my behalf, the blessings they would shower upon me, have repaid me a hundred fold. Those poor heart-broken girls. It seems wicked, father, to feel thankful for those little lives, yet I am, I love them so thoroughly. I received a letter from Lucy Hatfield yesterday, her mistress places every confidence in her; true she does not know the past and at my advice she never will. We cannot expect absolute frankness on all things in an age where enlightenment is too limited for the sway of common justice. Every girl but one has lived true to her promise of right, is that not sufficient proof they wish to reclaim themselves? My dear little pets, I will adopt them, father, every one. Is it not inexpressibly pathetic at the end, she says, Lucy says, 'Kiss little Carl for me,' who can understand the yearning of that poor girl mother's heart? I can. I love them as though they were my very own."

"Tut, tut! Reggie, you have time to attend to those things now, and indulge your caprice as you see fit, but don't think of hampering your life with obligations the weight of which you can scarcely appreciate when you are married—"

"When I am married! I shall not marry. I have no wish to marry, until I may meet the man I love, if I ever do. There's time enough."

At those words thoughtlessly spoken, the blood rushed over her face in crimson flow, she knew she already loved that handsome dark horseman, whom she had but to recall to feel her heart beat wildly in its happy knowledge. The girl paused, and walking to the window where the sun shining in dazzling glory enframed her head and shoulders in a luminous halo of morning light, looked with faraway, unseeing eyes, upon the burning disc of the sun, inhaled the perfume of all the freshness without, silently enjoying that inward happiness now singing to her heart.

Idly watching the dogs scampering on the lawn, she noticed indifferently at first that one of them held something in its mouth, stopping in its play to let the others almost seize it, then fly away all barking, panting, falling over each other, in the wild excitement and scramble. Something with a white handle, her riding stick.

Would he ride to-day? through that same lane? perhaps.

The reality they were destined to be to each other adapted itself in perfect conformity to her every thought.

What was his name?

Thus she stood for many minutes in thought; these new and extraordinary feelings convinced her beyond any reasoning that, with all her theories of the sublime and great possible to accomplish in life, her heart was restricted to follow faithfully and in adoring isolation forever the brilliant beaconlight of love.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Papa, won't you walk down to the cottage this morning? It is two weeks since you have been there and spent any little time with them. We can visit awhile before Jesse comes I have ordered the landau to take us for an airing."

"Very well," said General Claremont.

The general was a man ever ready to give, but didn't wish the people he assisted brought into his own life too closely.

"I'll not be a moment," his daughter cried running up stairs.

Slipping on a gray cashmere dress with a narrow band of velvet at the bottom, with hat and gloves to match, she reappeared looking superb in her quiet simplicity.

Her bounding step and buoyant spirit attested her glowing health.

"How beautiful the country is," she said turning to her father as they passed down the broad stone steps of the great house. "I marvel that people can endure city life constantly, or even at all. In the spring with the blue bell and corn flower, the green meadow and golden furrow, and now this most delightful of seasons, we feel our whole being uplifted, we *feel* the existence of the soul."

At this point they reach the gate, a prolonged howl of anticipation falls on their ears, three dogs come rushing after them. Regina unlatching the little side gate they leap ahead over the field, a frequent cut to the cottage. A house of eight rooms, fitted up to receive the first two children, yet now with six, there was ample room and comfort for all. An easy walk of fifteen minutes and they reach their destination.

The general did not wholly entertain the democratic ideas of equality his daughter encouraged, yet believed as we have said, in the broadest charity towards those who might need it. She on the other hand despised the necessity and name of charity, knowing it usually conveys to the beneficiary the oppressive consciousness of being the recipient of alms, and thought if it did not directly multiply its own creatures it often robbed them of proper self reliance self respect, and the spirit of energy essential to a successful combat with life and the world.

"Yet," she would often say, "how can we do good, except through charity?"

The general would sometimes in a wish to take her mind from questions of so serious a nature, offer the benefit of his own theories, and often end by coming back to hers, and tease her good-naturedly on the equal distribution argument, "they would be no better off and where would you be, Reg?"

"To talk of equal distribution of money is absurd, and if possible, would be futile, but, must we always have money in the future, because we always have in

the past?" she would answer and frequently add: "While that medium exists it will be the fell promoter of the unpardonable disease, avarice."

"With money in the world, legal restriction, moral reasoning, or religious training can never make men's hearts truly noble, for they cannot rise above the sordid love of gain while the avenue is open to them. Is there an honest spirit of trade, is not the whole domain of exchange beginning to be looked upon as a device for the supremacy of the unscrupulous? Until all men can do for themselves, then we must endure the evil of beggary and charity, I suppose."

They have reached the cottage.

A low-roofed structure surrounded by a broad veranda, covered with clinging vines that in their season gave a rich green arbor of cool shade.

Here in the hot days of summer with the whole grumbling community bathed in a perspiration, Regina would sit or lie on a rug, concealed by the thick hanging shrubbery from the passer-by, and let the little ones creep and climb about her indulging all their babyish tricks and humors.

Stopping to snatch them to her heart when doing something particularly cunning, and teaching them all to say "mama."

She enjoyed with all her ardent soul, this result of her work; to see them daily watch for her coming, not a day passed that she did not go to them, in rain or sunshine, since the first was found a little heap of dusty, almost lifeless humanity, in an ash barrel on a low street in the east side of New York.

Reading in one of the dailies of the circumstance, without a word to anyone she donned her hat and jacket, and started for the city, imbued with the purpose that if he still lived, the city should be relieved of his charge forever.

He was alive, but that was all, poor little atom.

"Treat him well, doctor," she said in her hearty outspoken way, "he is a child of destiny, and must live."

Every day for four weeks after she went to see him, held him in her arms. "He is mine," she said to those around, who looked at this regal beauty's tenderness in baffled curiosity, "mine, through the pathetic appeal of abandoned helplessness."

As they near the door, a wee voice is heard calling, "Mama, mama!"

Two little hands reach towards her beating the air in flurried expectancy.

"Mama, mama!" and turning her eyes toward her father he saw a faint suggestion of happy tears, then running to the outstretched arms, they close with a quick clasp around her neck, a childish shriek of joy, and she holds the little thing in warm embrace.

"My darling, my little angel," she whispers while he covers her face with kisses.

"Ah, father, this is my satisfaction and reward, to be thought of, watched for, by them, and hear their lisping words of love."

Is it not so, reader, if not you, yet there comes to your mind those who would sacrifice much, aye all, to hear some little lisping creature whose life has closed forever, whisper "mama," once more.

Bitter truth that we cannot appreciate when they are with us, but empty is all lament, for the

“touch of a vanished hand, the sound of a voice that is still.”

Let us not forget it while our privilege to enjoy.

“Father,” she said, raising her head from the little face pressed against her own, “do you know I believe responsibility gives one of the keenest joys to maternity?”

This was the little ash-barrel waif, Holly, so called she said, to ever keep her memory green in the path of duty toward the humble. The nurses now appeared, smiles of welcome on their fresh healthy faces, one by one the little ones are brought out, sweet and perfectly kept. It was a study and pleasure to listen to the carefully modulated tones of the nurses. These children had never heard one of those rasping, high-pitched voices of peevish irritability, some mothers consider their special prerogative to employ, shocking the nervous system of the child with loud unnecessary yells of reproof, with slippered accompaniment one minute, and slobbering over the helpless infant with unwholesome kisses and idiotic gush, whose etymology is commonly understood as “baby talk,” the next.

One was not treated as sulky when only timid, they were understood, and did not eat out their tiny hearts craving sympathy—but received it.

Among the collection was one girl, and she true to the instincts of her sex, rather usurped the power of dominion; as the petulant heart of caprice often governs the great and wise, so this little elf would say

with a stamp of her foot, "You *must*, you *shall*," and they would, like their bigger brothers.

Dressing them was one of Regina's chief pleasures.

None alike, no institutional air mocked at her generosity with its systematic levelling of similar attire.

It was a beautiful family, herself the common mother.

The little fellows felt manly in neat simple clothes of artistic completeness.

Holly the nucleus around whom the others had been gathered, was now five years of age, and as Regina looked into his bright eyes and ruddy face this morning, smoothing her hand over his shining golden curls in gentle caress, the horror of the crime his sin maddened mother intended to commit was brought to her mind in a hundredfold intensity.

Taking him in her arms she folded him close to her heart.

Yes, he was the dearest, but there was no favor shown by her at any time, no partial thoughtfulness or special tokens of love, ever wounded the hearts of the others, or planted in their minds the visible and anxious seed of jealousy.

After taking them all in her arms in tender greeting one little fellow toddled up and held out his arms to be lifted. He had never been well which was due no doubt to his mother's efforts before his birth, the circumstances of which, have their counterpart daily in every large city on earth.

CHAPTER IX.

It was a warm September afternoon three years before, one of those exquisite life-inspiring days when we want to kneel and thank God that we are.

Riding along near the bank of the river our heroine noticed a woman sitting on a rock close to the water's edge. Suspecting something wrong, for her attitude and appearance indicated that life held few pleasures for her; Regina turned down the steep incline and inquired what she meant by those despairing gestures. Bare headed, an old worn shawl drawn around her shoulders, the woman arose, as she did so a gasp of pity escaped the lips of the girl, never had she seen pictured, or imagined its prototype in any human face, the misery and hopeless despair, the apparent helplessness and poverty, that here confronted her

Stooping, the woman picked up something that had been at her feet, a something with a little purple pinched face and sunken eyes, the finger of Want, offspring of insatiable Greed, stamped on its every lineament.

But what of that, why speak of one, when there are thousands the same, or destroyed every day, by the laws which govern social honor, financial exchange, and the most extensive one by far, the wish on the

part of women to avoid care and disfigurement of personal charm. Don't say it isn't true, ladies, it is, and no one knows its dreadful truth better than you do yourselves.

Girls and wives daily cover their guilt, and cross their duty, in a supreme crime whose coronation is murder, and if that word means anything, it certainly means the destruction of a human creature, a being, and degrees of age or development cannot lessen the sin, clear the conscience that offers in palliation of the deed, the contemptible falsehood, "no life."

I seriously question whether women deserve more rights than they already have when they so wantonly squelch the first right and duty bestowed upon them.

"I do not wish to live," said this miserable woman.

"Can I not do something for you?" asked the girl.

"No one can do anything for me," was the dejected answer.

"I think I can," responded Regina, "dispel the evil thought of self-destruction so plainly written on your face there at the water's edge, forget the evil impulse that would induce you to a triple tragedy; be brave, no matter what your trials; I will help you. Take this money, come to me to-morrow," and slipping a purse and card into the hands of the now hopeful woman, she rode away, calling back as she did so, "Don't be afraid because the house is large and the dogs are free, you will not be harmed."

The next day the woman came and told her story, the story and history of many wretched homes, broken lives, and widespread destitution, but not the cause of all.

Her husband had once been secretary to an English gentleman, spoke several languages and was highly capable of making a good living could he have obtained a situation. He was willing and wanted work, not finding it and money gone, he was forced to accept positions far beneath his capabilities, often at menial labor; he was sensitive and proud. Some nights he would come home a little more talkative than usual, eventually unsteady, and in the end, he succumbed to that fascinating and destroying demon, that devil which we so largely encourage at first by a simple yielding to a friend's thoughtless urging, never thinking of, or seeking it ourselves, that dragon of destruction that confronts the world and buries in its sinister maw, the gifted and brilliant, the noted and able, the fearless and strong, as well as the ignorant, vicious, and depraved, the great and ever growing monster, Drink.

The woman related all the trying incidents up to the time when she decided to end all in death.

"But did you not think of the crime," asked Regina.

"I thought it would be better for us all to die, than endure life in the misery a drunken husband and father creates in his home; poverty rests too heavily on the shoulders of the wretched," she concluded.

Taken to Glendale cottage, with naught to worry her, she soon passed to recovery; but little Conrad had never been well, born there, he remained. The mother, now a widow, often came to see him, and departed with thanksgiving to her who gave the child such wholesome shelter.

The sun rises higher, the day is glorious.

"Papa, will you not go with us?"

Holly climbs up on the general's knee and sits contentedly there.

Now the wraps are brought out. Regina changes a pin, adjusts a fold, smooths a curl as they leave her hands equipped for the ride.

All is ready. Dell, the little witch, runs up and pursing her lips cries, "Dood bye, Ganpa," only three years of age. At those words, and her coquetish manner, there is a burst of merriment all round.

They are waiting eagerly for the carriage. It was a pleasant sight, and as General Claremont looked at his noble daughter, her face brightened by the transports of love and happiness he sighed many times. Did he feel her loyal merit a reproach to his own former unworthiness? perhaps he did. How blessed he was in this child.

A rumble of wheels sounds on the air, the children send up a shout of joy. Up the road comes two prancing roan cobs, the polished panels of the landau with its glistening wheels, casting off the sun's brilliant light at every revolution; a dextrous turn and the horses stand champing their bits impatient to be off.

Too little exercised to tamely stand, though docile, they turn their unchecked heads waiting the signal of command. Regina enters first, taking Connie in her arms, Holly by her side, the nurses following with the others.

There were no white capped badges of servitude

to place unnecessarily upon them the constant feeling of inferiority and dependence.

These girls were sensible and refined, conversing with their mistress with the freedom of an equal, they never approached careless familiarity, treated as ladies they behaved as such. They might have been three young mothers of equal station in life, Regina was dressed but little better, yet of course a close observer would note the higher grace of individuality and breeding, superior surroundings give.

A "good bye!" from six merry childish voices, a waving of little hands, a volley of kisses thrown from a dozen finger-tips, and they are off.

The nigh horse swerves a little, crowding his mate, a sharp crack of the whip rewards his spirit, then falling quickly into his pace he keeps his good behavior.

Now they bowl along over a smooth, hard road, breathing in the crisp air, the children clapping their tiny hands in unruly joy, the present moment all. The enveloping interest in them gave Regina for the moment a slight forgetfulness. Miles into the golden decked country until the church spires of Yonkers rise silhouette-like on the distant horizon.

It is time to turn, a farm-house close at hand has a sign reading, "Buttermilk." They stop, the children tasting it with grimaces that calls forth shouts of laughter.

Now they turn, back the same road, down by Jerome Park like a merry picnic party they speed along.

Just as they are nearing Glendale, a man passes, mounted on a docked iron gray charger, a magnificent animal, and the rider—

Regina turns slightly as he shoots ahead, her heart seems to rise in her throat, scarcely knowing what she did, she clasped the now sleeping infant closer to her breast, looking with almost startled eyes on the rapidly receding form far ahead.

It was the handsome unknown of the day before. She had felt, she knew, they must meet. The pleasure of driving was gone. "Hurry, Jesse," she said, she wanted to be alone with her thoughts.

The children are taken in, two of them asleep, and looking at them for a second and leaving a few simple directions, she returns and entering the conveyance, is driven home. Depressed and thoughtful she paused at the entrance after alighting, saying: "I shall not ride to-day." A sigh tried to escape her, but checking it, she turned, entering the hall, feeling somehow a terrible loneliness. What does she want or need, to add to her life another joy.

About to proceed to her room, her foot is arrested by voices from the drawing-room, one is easily recognized as her father's, the other is unknown, and yet, has she not heard it somewhere?

With a second's halt she turns to enter the room, but stands transfixed on the threshold. She hears her father's voice which seems to come from the edge of space, saying:

"My daughter Regina, Mr. Eltham."

CHAPTER X.

He stands before her, how gracious is his manner of smiling courtesy.

She lost all definite notion of her own identity, as she opened her lips to speak, no word issued from them.

Afterward she distinctly recalled, hearing the foliage without, and thinking minutely of some cherub heads just above his own, a sunlit scene of a pasture and green hills, a hundred groping and extraordinary thoughts were seeking an outlet from her unconscious soul, while her conscious one was saying, "Bertrand Eltham, Bertrand Eltham;" and her conscious eyes were looking calmly into his.

Oh the danger of the excessive power of magnetism. Had the surroundings favored fear, she would have felt a stir of superstition, the rapidly developing and peculiar traits of her own character were not the unfolding of any weakness hitherto half suspected by herself.

Never before had she been agitated or controlled by a sole idea. The intercourse of her whole life, had been glowing liberality and expansion, now she seemed to herself to stagnate on a rigid creed of love, whose only privilege or desire was to confine itself from further action.

He was a god, an idol, and the pleasure that now brooded in her heart, was itself volunteer of eternal worship. His name swam before her eyes.

It was he, the man she had thought of, dreamed of, wept for and loved, since the fleeting second of the night before, a passing second that in the lives of multitudes meant nothing, but to her meant the story and sequel of life and love, happiness or woe. He had awakened that heart from its peaceful slumber in the solitude of the past, and filled it with strange and varied longings in an unknown atmosphere of seductive charm. She could have smothered it in chagrin this moment at its soft whisperings and sunny fancies, trying to force herself to some reason she fancied a very rapid and inane expression was occupying her telltale face, and she closed her lips with a hard pressure whose effect on their softness was, not to say the least, intensely fascinating or distinctly inviting. Then she held out her hand without a word.

General Claremont was expatiating on the merits of a new style of saddle, Mr. Eltham attentively listened, but glanced ever and again at the face of the beautiful girl, now sitting in perfect composure, opposite.

Presently he turned and took occasion to speak of the incident of the previous day, apologizing for what might have seemed an intrusion or freedom. She smiled saying in return: "It was a well-meant kindness I fully appreciate. Had I been in difficulty your presence would have been most opportune, and probably, with the usual contrariness of events, you would have been miles from that particular spot had I wanted aid."

"Quite true," he smiled in reply.

"I feel that my daughter is perfectly safe in riding, when skill and presence of mind only is required, but we cannot guard against accidents," interrupted the general.

Conversation passed from one topic to another in easy succession.

Regina forgot everything and sat enthralled by the music and eloquence of his voice, scarcely moving for fear of losing a note. He rises to go, how she longed to detain him, the time had flown; but his horse is at the door.

"Miss Claremont," she turns those peculiar eyes now looking coal black, on him, "I have invited your father over to take a look at my stock some morning; may I hope you would find pleasure in coming too?"

"If you knew her better, Mr. Eltham, you would not feel it necessary to extend the invitation, she would certainly come without it, horses, dogs, and by no means least, babies, are her heart's joy. I am grandfather to six already through her generosity," laughed the general.

Mr. Eltham started visibly, this lovely young girl the mother of six children? was the question that looked from his surprised and rather crestfallen face.

"Oh, adopted ones, Mr. Eltham, my girl is still heart whole, and satisfied to live with her old father only."

The two young people exchanged a swift glance, had they known each other years, could volumes have been written, that mutual glance would have far outweighed the meaning of it all.

Heart spoke to heart, soul to soul, no barrier of life but honor could have stemmed the tide of this surging torrent of love.

They smiled an intuitive recognition of each other's thought.

An almost imperceptible sigh passed her lips, an answering response came from his. Slowly they turned away, the reason of each rising in rebellion, at the truth their hearts already revealed to them.

They walked down the steps to see him off, the father and daughter.

"Shall I see you soon?" asked Eltham as if speaking to the father, yet looking intently at the daughter's face.

The general was about to answer Regina laid her hand on his arm saying to Eltham as she did so:

"To-morrow."

"Surely, Reggie, Mr. Eltham doesn't expect us quite so soon," said the general.

"It is none too soon, I assure you, general. I shall expect you," Mr. Eltham answered.

"We shall be there," she returned.

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow."

A low bow, a smile he did not try to control, displayed his even teeth, a "Good-afternoon," and he was gone.

The diversity of sensations that stirred the hearts of these two people, would be difficult to analyze.

General Claremont was shrewd, he walked back and forth on the finely graveled path, before the

entrance, his hands under his coat tails, and a very discerning smile, puckering his mouth at intervals.

He glanced at his daughter; she was intently watching the retreating form of Mr. Eltham.

He bent under pretext of lifting a drooping vine of honeysuckle, and quietly bound the creeping member to its trellis, content if she were so to let her dream awhile in silence.

He felt after a few moments the time propitious for a question, he wanted to know what she thought of this stranger and was a little puzzled at her continued silence. He knew the opinion favorable, however, without any word from her, finally he said:

"Well?"

"Father, I shall marry him!"

The general laughed aloud.

"That's a hasty decision, daughter."

"I shall marry Bertrand Eltham, I love him!"

The general looked more bewildered than amused now, as he answered:

"You are rash, Reggie; we do not know him, nor anything concerning him. He has good ideas of business, and should he turn out to be what he promises on so very brief an acquaintance your interest may not be misplaced; but love—I can scarcely believe you are one to acknowledge such a sentiment for a man seen but an hour of your life."

"But I do acknowledge it father, and while I admit what seems to my judgment as well as yours, a weakness, I cannot escape its singular power."

Scrutinizing her face for a moment thoughtfully he

said: "Why, Reggie, this is not like you, you have prided yourself on never having yielded to capricious thoughts, and seemed in the past disinclined to listen to, or favor the approach to this subject. If I mistake not, I have heard you speak of the necessity of 'serious meditation,' as a point not lightly to be disposed of. My darling, you were right in that, you cannot think too seriously of an issue that may bring much joy, or involve you in deep difficulty and woe."

"I am not mistaken, father. I see the truth of all you say. I have hitherto spoken with the dispassionate calm of indifference. But now, my heart for the first time feels, and I must act accordingly. I know that I am lovable, my glass tells me a truth which people's eyes confirm. I am capable of making any true man happy. Why need I wait in squeamish false modesty through a series of incidents conventionality imposes, delays that sting the suffering heart to perpetual torture, imposed by a class who have neither heart to love nor blood to inspire it, while I at custom's covenant smirk and blush in apparently coquettish evasion like the rest of my sex, whose insipidity, with 'drooping lids, and lifting of face, baring of shoulders, and well timed sighs', and the devil knows what other subtle graces, mental wantons who sin with their eyes, lure love to wake, yet bid it keep under, tempt man to fall, but bid reason control, then we are filled with an outraged wonder, when they get to wanting us body and soul. That is flirtation, catching a man, for modern thought and argument, frames the opinion that a man who

becomes a benedict is *caught*, a victim, instead of a willing and happy participant in the occasion. That is formality's courtship, I don't want it!"

"You are unreasonable, my girl."

"Unreasonable? insane! and though convinced I cannot change so evident a truth as my love for Mr. Eltham, you will not oppose me, father?"

"My foolish girl, I will direct you."

Then she related in detail the meeting of the day before and the remarkable impression which had not since left her. Re-entering the house, they sit down to lunch, still discussing the new acquaintance.

"Is he not quite the handsomest man you have ever seen, papa, and courageous, to leave the gayety and life of European drawing-rooms for dismal old Baisely, and purely from a business incentive which utterly lacks the spur of necessity?"

"We'll give a little informal in his honor. What do you say?" asked the general.

"You are so good, papa," she cried.

The general laughed, as he replied, "Good at matchmaking you mean, I suppose."

"But I haven't a dress in which to appear," she exclaimed suddenly.

This statement was so thoroughly droll they both laughed, and the girl with a slight guiltiness in her face, for style and dress in the main, had always been most severely condemned by her, as an abomination that obscured in its folly many women of otherwise good common sense. Some of her words had been a "slave projecting institution, whose fatal

power endorsed unscrupulous vanity, degraded virtue, cultivated the empty folly of vulgar display, and necessitated the subordination of judgment and reason."

But in spite of ourselves, "the habits of our minds are a reference to the established."

Her father knew she must have dozens of dresses scarcely worn.

"And is this the little philosopher," he asked when his amusement had subsided, "who yesterday said in this very room to me, 'There is in the heart of every person of even moderate intelligence to-day a lurking and somewhat unwilling recognition of the obvious truth and growing knowledge of the rights of all; why not grapple with it now, rich and poor, great and small and with a good pull and a strong one, strive together to reach a high plane of universal amity.' And now," he went on, while her cheeks burned crimson in silence, "she must have a dress, a new, of course, a stylish one, so fastidious has grown her taste, so full of thoughts and wishes the heart, varying immeasurably from those of yesterday. She would seek admiration which has hitherto been, if not unacceptable at least uncared for. My thoughtful Reg in love, this is a metamorphosis."

These words were said in a half bantering tone of pretended reproach which she made no attempt to resent; she felt as if she fully deserved more than ridicule or reproach for a punishment, but, since she lacked the inward strength to direct her own impulse, she knew that from without was unavailing and replied simply:

"Philosophy is useless and powerless when brought face to face with an over-mastering human passion which transcends explanation."

Time could not have resulted in a deeper attachment, a truer affection than Regina Claremont now felt for Eltham, whether lasting or not, time only could tell. It was contrary to all promise of her life, that she should yield to a violent and sudden fancy, might it not be contrary in view of this first inconsistency, that the latter should endure? We shall see.

"Do not look troubled, father, whether right or wrong will be fully determined, my present thoughts are not decisive, but I believe the future will confirm the wisdom of this longing.

"Love is so convincing, so all in all when it is truly love.

"You will see my resolution, the resolution that I will be his wife, happily justified, the world shall envy us our joy, this shall be a home—for I will never leave you, father—a home without a sorrow, with no room for gnawing or disturbing secrets, no closet for the dry boned fearful rattle of a skeleton. How dull it must be at Baisely place with no companionship whatever, yet he will prove equal to the test of conviction, I saw it in his noble face, and rally to his force the success his smiling and indolent friends may contemptuously or curiously doubt. How friends hate to see one succeed, don't they, papa? a rather sarcastic homily in itself from the Damon and Pythias standard, yet who so prolific in advice of a

contrary nature to your intention and so fulsome in accruing to themselves the importance of same, when one, in opposition to vindictive thrust, grasps the banner of prosperity."

"I often think," replied her father leaning back in a large comfortable chair whose soft languor was sensuously paving the way in his brain for a doze, "much success in life is due more to the intense if not commendable desire to disappoint our friends than to baffle enemies or gain the jurisdiction of power or wealth."

"The peculiar gleam of envy with which intimates learn of one's triumph in any way, must be a severe and significant flaw in the eyes of those who fancy the millenium period of purity at hand or believe the 'love your neighbor as yourself' spirit is growing alarmingly apace," was her smiling rejoinder.

Then continued: "But Mr. Eltham misses his friends, we must dispel the memory of their absence, we must learn if he plays and invite him to dine some evening. Did you notice how feelingly he spoke of home, as he said, 'although a foster child no happiness of the best home has been unknown to me.' My mind will turn to nothing but the charm of conjecture regarding him, we must extend him every civility of hospitality.

How earnestly he said 'not on the principle of the unfettered liberty of adventure, but to demonstrate my self-reliance have I embarked in this business transaction.' One can believe him entertaining at all times that manner to inferiors,

which above all else proclaims true manliness.

"Did you notice that peculiar and frequent gesture of one hand, it was a phrase in itself. If he knew, might he not resent this ready freedom of attachment, would he value a passion or honor, a love, provoked by a casual meeting, denounce as superficial or embrace it as a god-given, a holy germ of inspiration?"

These thoughts were now the substance of silent inquiry and meditative debate, above all must there be no premature, no frenzied or impassioned vehemence beyond taste or necessity of circumstance, not even on her own particular hobby, the wrongs of her sex. She would appeal to him through her womanliness and repose, assuming no frigid indifference to temper desire, but a gracious warmth to inspire respect.

A hearty civility whose reward would be confidence; a smiling inference of pleasure at his coming, a vaguely prophetic glimpse of regret in her eyes on his departure or a chilling silence at a delayed appointment, followed by a later enthusiasm of transport, destitute of excuse, but joy.

Through this comparative scale of eventual scenes might she walk to the throne of his heart. "Bah!" she now exclaimed aloud, "that is the resort of the brainless, a subterfuge of trivialities merit despises; but the deportment of folly, in itself a treachery to love; my contentment by his side shall express the mood of truth, a cordial friendly frankness the delight his presence gives. I will plan nothing, do nothing, be unaffected, all myself, and act without the aid of any art, win his heart as he won mine by fate alone.

“Father,” she said, standing up in her beautiful proportions, “am I not a woman to be loved, and should not Eltham—”

She paused, General Claremont was asleep, her long silence and the easy chair, had made temptation valid.

CHAPTER XI.

Bertrand Eltham left the Claremont grounds, and we might say his heart, surely his thoughts, were completely riveted on the lovely girl he had just left.

"This is the type of woman for whom men have gladly died," he said to himself, "a type that finds few men worthy of her love. A face with many faces in it," he mused as her flitting expression of simplicity, earnestness, smiles or thoughtful interest recurred to him. What easy aptitude of reply and humor of suggestion. I have met many women, sometimes fancied I loved them, all men have, but for her, a life of devotion would be but a tithe of the reward her love should receive. She must have many admirers," his heart twinged acutely at its own jealous intimation.

He thought of her quiet hateur and a hundred times that electric glance which seemed to tell his heart a truth he had imagined, but now knew, he had never truly felt before.

Little did he think when sending his letter to General Claremont, he should there meet the pensive girl seen for a moment that evening, the rich and petted mistress of the home, an heiress and a beauty. He understood the sex; their virtues and follies, coquetries and faults.

Sometimes doubted them seriously, almost universally, so many had he met even in a polite sphere, who had received the attention of courtesy, with smiling encouragement to freedom.

He was not a paragon of virtue himself. Men seldom are.

Thinking of the variety of subjects they had lightly discussed this afternoon, he was convinced that she was a most unusual girl, rather original, an indifference on the part of both her father and self as to what society might say or think of them, an intolerance and disregard of the bonds that fetter in wealth, but quickly free in poverty. Discussing the points of a horse as intelligently as a trader would have done, and at a reference to a recent strike and one in progress, he had characterized the conduct of the men as a menace of evil, and the leaders as "tricksters trying to urge their ignorant brothers to a criminal revolution." And looking quietly into his face she had answered: "While tyranny lasts, there will be revolutions, it is now and has ever been the historical answer to the oppressor, by the oppressed. These barriers of strife far from being an impediment to progression are raised in the natural course of progression itself."

"Papa says," she continued, "that folly is more alluring than reason, and that we are vainly chasing a romantic shadow which would bring destruction in its own fulfillment. However that may be we know negligence, with the knowledge we possess to-day, is a crime, this disgraceful state of harboring wretches,

and how can they be anything but wretches, six or seven in a room, a chalk line the division of apartment. Where can children acquire individuality, decency or retain purity so reared. There are many demands, we the rich and influential must recognize, and which can *now* be made attainable without serious digression from the harmonious conditions of the present social and political body."

After she ceased there was a silence for a moment.

A strong-minded woman had always seemed to Eltham a horror to be avoided, a defiant and aggressive creature whose watchword was antagonism, combating in their pugnacious demands for the rights of men, laying themselves open to unkind words or ill mannered gibes.

Here was a beautiful young girl, rich beyond reckoning, speaking in a low gentle voice of culture whose musical tone held one chained by its vibrant thrill, abjuring the rights of her own possessions, advocating those of all.

Another moment she said: "Rank and station is but a cruel myth, pounded into the human race by the most reprehensible means of brutal power. I feel a contemptuous pity for those who cannot free themselves from the shackles of veneration, caused by antiquity of wrong and unnumbered ages of habit and ignorance." There need be no calculation and but one conclusion, he was completely, irrevocably in love with her.

What were the puny candle rays of the past to this calm steady flame of growing passion he now felt.

How sincerely, almost sacredly, he wished at that moment there had never been a past dotted here and there with thrilling incidents, deeds of careless intimacy, filtering sands of a foolish if not wicked indulgence that so often extinguishes the temper of self respect.

He felt unworthy to win her love, yet he resolved to do so.

She had thoroughly usurped every corner of his heart, filled every chamber of his brain.

How noble and good she had looked standing on the steps as he rode away, her hand lightly resting on her father's arm, the sun shedding its midday warmth and brightness on her head, the olive cheek glowing with health, and above all those rare and striking eyes, which spoke of the presence of passion and smiled the promise of love.

Ah did they, or had he interpreted ill?

To talk to her in trouble, what sound advice and tender sympathy she would give, with what lavish and unchangeable love would she buoy a man through all adverse conditions, and firmly steer his craft to sunny ports of peace.

His heart had opened to an order he could not disobey, closed tightly on the noiseless visitor who silently averred its healthy presence through the steady yet scarcely calm reflection now stalking through his brain.

Every precise detail of her dress, and accent of her voice, every point of contrast to the fine ones he had seen and known, rolled over him as the billows of a

freshening gale, that cooled his feverish senses and eager warmth of passion, in an awakening thought whose sweetness surged on dawning hope, and raised his soul to heights beyond the bourne of judgment.

Here was no triumphant march of passion, but security of honored love awaiting him, could he fortunately win her.

The mischievous past; he could not wholly dispense with the memory and license of its vanity, or dismiss from his questioning conscience the ripples of doubt and blame.

"Had I but met this girl before," a deep sigh of regret echoed the value of the wish and attested that what we call the "wild oat" thoughtless deeds of youth, (and he had been the best of his set) yet in the presence of this new found feeling he knew they had left a seamy side in memory's hall unpleasant to the touch of sober retrospection. Now came the punishment. He regretted as all good men must, (for guilt and evil are far from synonymous) those headstrong freaks of sanctioned caprice, that recurring to the mind of a man at such an hour, the tone and flavor of the past is vividly renewed in all its direct and unwholesome suggestion.

An unfinished sketch wearies the eye of fevid expectation. Half forgotten messaghs ring and re-echo, when the treading feet of a retaining power verge near their empty craters.

Thus will mind and memory gauge our faults, and stamp our silent senses with an awe of banished isolation, that anchors anguish to our soul in pain, whose

depth subdues the charm we struggle to regain.

Now was every faculty of right within him assembled to the task of condemnation, when he fain would hold in truth's embrace, the unsullied flower of purity. It is time to change the current of his thoughts. The gates of Baisely loom up in the near distance. Driving to the stable, he throws the reins to a groom and takes a look around.

The whole surroundings show the guidance of a mind stocked with the knowledge required. He was going to the city, a new opera was to be produced. Passionately fond of music, the art found in him, a most liberal patron.

"Take the cart," he said, half turning as he started for the house, a large, gloomy place, situated at the left of a ridge now covered with half naked-trees.

The house might, from its style of architecture, have been built at the time of the revolution. Although in good repair it was somewhat spooky and dismal to him in his present mood.

Doubly empty it seemed now, why? but all places are lonely in the absence of the one who alone can make them bright.

Standing he looked across a still gray field at a deep, wooded valley in the rear, a small lake, placid and shining like a brilliant jewel in a dull setting, peeped out from beneath a sloping glade.

There were many natural beauties at Baisely Place, but Eltham had no eyes for them now, an intolerable feeling of homesickness came over him.

For the first time since leaving the old world he

seemed to realize that its life and gayety had been a great factor to him, yet the pursuit of idle pleasure had caused him in disgust to form the resolution to be a worker in the mart of life.

Having sufficient means to gratify the wish for a moderate speculation he immediately set to work. All his pleasure-loving friends gave him six months to ride his hobby, as they jocosely wished him god-speed on his journey and venture. It was not yet two, and his sinking heart for the moment thought of the gay life and its advantages, while renouncing its guilt and follies.

Yet did he wish to be back with the old friends? No, he wished to be back with the new. He longed to see the face of Regina Claremont again, a burning impatience seized him, how long a time must elapse ere he could hold that sublime form in his arms. In imagination he held her already, and closing his teeth with a movement that emphasized his firm resolve, he muttered a vow that it should not be long till that imagination was a happy and lingering reality.

He hated to enter the house, the whole world outside seemed to speak of her fresh young beauty. He wandered down the slope picking up an apple here and there, whose ruddy cheeks gave luscious promise, then sated in a boyish trick he'd fling them far away saying to the setter at his heels, "After it, boy!" laughing at his scamper in the trial.

Now he leaps a fence with the agility of an athlete, a supple dexterity and grace evincing his muscular power. He wished she had not been so rich and

high, he could grant no favor, gratify no whim, the world was at her feet now, he scarcely dared hope that she would love him, a hundred fears piqued and dissuaded belief in his cause, almost baffling the gratification of endeavor.

"She *shall* be mine, I'll make her love me!" he said aloud.

Proceeding to the house he made a careful toilet and went to dinner.

Domestic in his tastes and nature, the thought would force itself upon him as he sat there alone of the unutterable joy and blessing it would be to have her sitting opposite, his wife, the hum of children's voices breaking the silence of the old place. He could eat little, although a table heaped by a considerate butler with every substantial good and delicacy, he barely touched the repast. Raising a glass of wine to his lips he said softly: "To her whom I hope to win," and his handsome brown eyes looked far away, and again she rose before him as she stood a few hours before, filling his breast with an exquisite suffering no meditation could modify.

"Your horse is ready, sir!"

Eltham arose from the table; did he wish to see the opera?

He had thought so until now, but he knew above the sound of all song the music of her voice as heard to-day would still hold his soul in rapture.

Yes, he would go, he must if only to divert his mind, he passed into the hall, putting on his overcoat, and walked aimlessly into the library. A keen,

fall wind rushes whistling by the gallery, shaking the broad casements. A blazing grate fire seemed doubly cheerful and inviting, here he could sit and dream, but no, seizing his hat he leaves the house, leaps into the cart and starts briskly for the station. The swift easy gait of the horse, the swaying motion of the cart seem to exhilarate, to raise his spirits and dispel in a measure the intense, the new and singular loneliness he felt.

They reach the turn, the station is at the right; after a slight hesitation he turns to the left, the groom silently wondering, and now they can see glimmering a mile ahead, the electric lights of Claremont Avenue.

Turning, they glide down the smooth drive, his eyes fixed intently off to the left where burn the lights of Brightwood; though now in front of the entrance the house seems a great distance off with its long curving carriage way. The horse, held taut, slackens to a slow walk, and Eltham, raising his eyes, looks long and earnestly at the stately mansion which he now feels holds his very existence in its walls. She eclipsed his interest in all earthly things but herself; the seed of love had taken giant root, and opened fully to the light of being.

He turns and rides slowly back, then once again more slowly than before, at times they almost stop, the delicate mouth of the horse sensitive to a shade of pressure.

Longingly he gazes, "was she there?" "what was she doing?" "did she think of him?" his heart gave a great throb, he hoped so.

The lower part of the house was a blaze of light. They rarely entertained. Regina had told him so that day, why was the whole place illuminated? Looking around the moonlit landscape there was scarcely more than a twinkle of light to be seen in the houses about.

Of course she didn't think of him, she was happy among old friends, dancing, singing or jesting. Ah, if he could without more ado go up and ring. How in his heart that moment he cursed conventionality. "To the winds with propriety and precedent, I will go in!" They are near the gate when he formed this decision.

Immediately another thought arises.

May there not be another by her side at this moment, a chosen and preferred one, listening to those liquid tones, which seemed now to sound on his ear, "To-morrow, to-morrow," her last word to him that afternoon.

Was there some handsome fellow now holding her hand, perhaps kissing—

At a sharp twitch of the rein Phyllis starts into a rapid trot, they are long past the gate, his heart contracting with the scorching pain of jealousy, that demon always ready to juggle with imagination, and though held in contempt we all secretly acknowledge his power.

Why do I love her, he asked himself now; foolish question, for she had every charm to enthrall the heart.

Why, was self-evident from the raven crowned

head to the tip of her aristocratically proportioned feet.

And right here we venture that Regina Claremont is the only heroine on record with a number four foot who wore a shoe, and a common sense shoe at that, to fit it. In a Grecian sandal it would have been revealed a limb of symmetrical and artistic beauty, an illustration free from the results of a barbarous vanity, each toe as straight and faultless as the day she was born. She had feet, knew their worth, and dressed them in comfortable fitting shoes with heels under the heels, and not under the middle of the foot, causing that grotesque gait but a caricature of grace.

Each pink nailed toe had ample room. Remember, vain reader, to pinch your feet by will is quite generally accepted as evidence that your brain has been pinched by nature. Your misfortune? no, brain, like the other organs is subject to development.

Why did he love her? and his heart answered she is charming, lovely, sympathetic, pure and generous. Those were the reasons it assigned, and they were good enough, he thought.

Once more they slowly pass, once more he recalled her as she had stood that afternoon.

He would return home, and all the way his thoughts were in the same groove. "My beautiful love," he said to himself "with her piquant charm and half haughty independence." He sought the library, where a fire burned cheerily.

Eltham, in common with us all, loved a bright grate fire.

He threw himself down in a chair feeling greatly unlike the man of the morning. He felt disinclined to move again, to read or do anything but sit still and think—of her, always of her.

The cat came purring against the chair, then with a graceful spring lit on his knee. Who has not watched with interest the wonderfully harmonious grace and dexterity of the cat, when in one spring it co-ordinates into the movement the entire action of all the muscles. They know precisely how far to jump, and that with perfect ease.

Now the purring and sinuous contentment gave him a peculiar kind of comfort, a more restless, or intelligent animal might not convey.

“Ah, Tom,” he said at length, after stroking his glossy fur, “do you know that I am miserable?” He was sitting by her side talking in low tones all the tender words of love, blending thought and action; he was with her in thought, but who was *really* with her?

Ah, the agony of suspense and jealousy, yet could he at that moment have looked into the drawing-room of General Claremont’s house, he would have beheld a young girl in a simple white dress of soft wool, a few pink roses in the belt, sitting with one cheek resting on her hand, two brilliant eyes reading.

“He stood beside me,
The embodied image of the brightest dream,
That like a dawn heralds the day of life.
The shadow of his presence made my world
A Paradise. All familiar things he touched,
All common words he spake, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.”

And had he stood at her elbow as she now closed the book with a little half sigh of pain, he might have read in gilt letters, stamped upon the calf, Shelley.

He would not have been jealous or doubtful of his chances had he seen the lines that she read over and over again. Those lines, to her, personified himself. Could he have read the thoughts her soul mirrored now, he would have slept in complacency, but no, could he have read or known those thoughts, he could not have slept at all.

Would she come to-morrow?

Rising, he stands long in silence, then exclaims aloud: "Is this love or enchantment?" and every fiber of his being answered, "Love."

CHAPTER XII.

The following morning was sharp and cold but bright.

Regina, not sensitive to changes of temperature, walked to the cottage, and after a short stop, returned and dressed for the ride to Baisely.

"It must be true, father," she said to the general on the way, "that all girls are more or less sentimental, for my love is adorned with a previous flavor of romance I have scorned before to recognize within my nature."

Eltham was standing on the porch, his face smiling a more than glad welcome as they cantered up. Running down the steps he extended his hand in cordial greeting to the general, both hands to the girl, then assisted her to alight.

"You mustn't feel like strangers here," he said heartily and then concluded, looking in her face, "let us become good friends at once."

A gracious laugh escaped her as she answered:

"We are good friends now."

After she had sprung to the ground he held her hand a moment; to say they were happy at the contact would be trite and useless, it was bliss to both hearts.

Who has not felt the mysterious warmth which

the first touch of a loved being, spreads throughout the frame, that rapture they now felt, and in unison with that electric touch, he gazed down into her eyes sparkling with a blithesome unconsciousness of awakening womanhood.

It required all the strength of mind of which he was possessed not to startle the lovely girl or incense the father by an indiscreet and premature token, or allusion to the consuming love with which she had inspired him, and which seemed at this moment determined to overpower discretion.

Regina was not one who would attempt to fan a flame of passion by coquettish looks and captivating manners, and she would not now dare think she had inspired much more than a passing interest in his mind.

But her blood quickened as he held her hand, and the color came and went in rapid succession on her cheek, while her face displayed an unwonted light and shade of expression which betrayed the silent and responsive thought at his touch, she tried in no degree to conceal. What is more admirable than intelligent honesty? Perfect candor is sword and shield alike for man or woman.

Eminently upright, her whole soul looked her truthful feelings, her open genuine smile sparkled on her countenance like the rays of sunshine on a rose. Eltham thought, "her face is divine, with but a touch of the mortal in it."

"You will find my house much larger than the requirements of my family demand," he said as they were about to ascend the steps.

"Let us inspect the stock first," exclaimed Regina holding back. "I wish to see if the prospects are favorable for you to breed finer animals than we already have, I doubt it," she continued archly, "for our Floribel and Merzeby are as handsome and speedy as one could wish for carriage use, and could a combination of human selection and blooded stock, result in a finer specimen than this?" she added a little jubilantly pointing to Restive who now followed her without leading up the walk.

"I could not wish to surpass, but may I not hope to equal him?" he returned as a light gust of wind blew over her hair and shoulders, some withering leaves from the drooping branches of the stately old willows they were slowly passing, and he carefully brushed them off, picking singly a tenacious few from the dark braids.

He thought, looking at the aristocratic curve of her neck and shoulders, "she has the attributes of a perverse, impetuous republican with her haughty disavowals of it;" if anything had been needed to augment his love, it was furnished in this unerring proof of her ancestral distance from a plebeian source.

Her manner seemed to breathe and permeate the air of courts and kings, yet she openly and proudly acknowledged a democratic obscurity of origin, while shedding most lavishly abroad the deeds which register the table of our worth, and shame the paltry dreary pride (or would but for our selfishness,) that lauds, and counts our value to the world sufficient, in the empty trumpery and nonsense of blue blood,

and noble lineage. They both felt a momentary wish, eschewing from all motive for so doing to laugh aloud which they now did, with a correlative waving of explanation, coupled with an invisible but understood solution of the mutual and rather disquieting mutation.

The general sauntered leisurely ahead, turning occasionally to make some remark or suggestion, Eltham replying politely, though often at random, his eyes and thoughts completely engrossed by the girl at his side. The fine steeds were brought out and both Regina and her father could scarcely suppress a frequent exclamation at the truly magnificent collection.

"I speak for the first foal by Halcyon, out of Peep o' Day," she said, naming the animals that struck her as particularly combining the best points.

"You shall have first choice above and before all," answered Eltham cordially and leaving the general who was interested in a more minute examination, they gradually retreated till they traversed the distance down the slope to the edge of the lake on which a boat was rocking to and fro in the morning breeze.

Insensible to all but the present delight a deep silence falls upon them.

He had longed to sit by her side, he is doing so now, he does not trust himself to look into her eyes. Neither speak or wish to do so, there is an absorbing restfulness in the charm they feel at this stage of their acquaintanceship. All nature seemed brilliant

and merry in unison with their rejoicing hearts, even now convening in full persuasion of granted petition.

There need be no coaxing or entreaty in this case, each one confidently despatched its own essay of power, vouchsafing no exclusion to the conqueror.

"How happy I am," said Regina aloud.

"Will you tell me why?" he asked tenderly.

"Not yet," she answered.

"May I guess?" he asked again.

Not yet," she repeated.

The swish, swish of the water a few yards away caused them both to look out over its rippling surface, his hand closed softly over hers, consciously her fingers clasped his, and words were then unnecessary.

"Fine view here, Mr. Eltham?"

They both started, smiled.

"Very," replied Eltham, answering the general who had joined them. "You have a fine sweep at Brightwood too, and much more room; by the way, I drove by your place last night, general."

"Ah, why didn't you drop in?"

"I should have been pleased to, but"—and here Eltham tried to frame something about being in haste, but his voice sank to an inarticulate tone of no meaning, as their eyes met and hers seemed to ask "why?" with a questioning shade of disappointment.

"You were all ablaze for one thing which led me to think there might be something unusual going on, and I scarcely felt that I could avail myself of your general invitation so soon, it was decidedly lonely here last night, I assure you," he continued.

"More so than before?" she asked.

"More lonely than ever before," he said in a low tone.

"No, we rarely entertain," said the general, "we are very disrespectful to local usages, but we do not wish to live entirely for ourselves as you will learn when you know us better, especially may I say that of my daughter of whom I am more than proud."

"Oh papa!"

"More than proud," the general reiterated.

Eltham wished to pay her a tribute, a compliment, containing no flattery, but one her character merited, yet he contented himself by simply saying, "You may well be so, sir."

"We do not always attend church," continued the general, "and when we do we brave Mrs. Grundy's comments, by exerting a disregard to denomination or creed. The golden rule is a good enough religion for me; I think, for all, for to do good a man must first feel it in his own heart, and no outward show of piety, or inward conviction of right can give a truer significance to our lives than is given by our deeds alone, and I have never knowingly in word or action wronged any man," he ended in a slow quiet voice.

"Or woman either!" exclaimed his daughter proudly, looking over the lake at the swinging boat, wishing Eltham and she were in it, and vague conjectures and comparisons of a life by his side flitting through her head.

"Why, general!"

This exclamation brought Regina to herself and

quickly looking up, she was startled at her father's rather pale face and drawn look of suffering. With a rapid bound she was at his side, her arms around his neck.

"Dear papa, what is it? come sit down."

"A little dizziness, that's all, Reggie, I feel better now."

But she insisted that he must sit.

How this old man longed every day to tell his daughter the whole truth, and hear her lips say that the unsullied years of his life wiped out the former stain, but he lacked the courage, he feared her just contempt.

"I am well now," he said, half rising, but they would not listen and made him remain seated for a long time.

Looking at her anxious face he thought, "no, he could not destroy her peace or confidence and pride in him, she nor the world should never know."

A robin lit singing on a bough above her head, so might her life be as free from care. She must not know him, as one who could once have cast a woman from her high estate of virtue. Wretched man, he could not after all these years defraud the punishment of conscience, and he closed his eyes as if in weary resignation to bear his burden alone in everlasting silence.

Eltham pressed them to enter the house, and the general, apparently recovered, arose, but took his daughter's arm to quiet her concern, trying to explain away her fears as they went.

Passing through an octagonal vestibule, richly ornamented, they entered a spacious, wainscoted room, with chimney-pieces finely wrought in ornamental carvings from mantel to ceiling. Vases of flowers on every hand, dispersed with here and there a gem of art, showed the occupant's culture.

The whole place breathed a concordance of present comfort and departed splendor. Eltham urged the general to a glass of wine, and the latter, though affirming perfect recovery from his slight indisposition, accepted and over a light lunch they discussed a variety of topics.

From concentration of capital and æsthetics of courtesy, to the ethics of marriage, and finally "Is life after all worth living," and what comprises true happiness, to which Regina made reply, "Life is worth living, if only to find the wondrous workings of the human mind. How each year adds more knowledge to our store. E'en from our birth, till memory is no more." "I believe the secret of true happiness, the only happiness, consists in simplicity, a curbing of unwholesome longings, to be content with what may come to us, with no undue striving after the high or unknown."

"You would not discourage ambition?" asked Mr. Eltham.

"No, but I would greatly modify it, and all desire which has grown to such a monster in the average human heart, ever spurring its victims to new avenues of conquest, till they lose sight of the noble purpose of creation, the high and better aims of human and individual life."

"In striving for enjoyment, we no doubt sacrifice many of our duties?" he said.

"Not enjoyment and not sorrow is our destined end or way.

But to act that each to-morrow find us farther than to-day," farther in the accomplishment of good, in the assistance of the downtrodden. Farther in a curtailment of those fatal and prevalent evils, which study but to foster their own demoralizing power, a power which in the end will cause an uprising in comparison to which the records of the French."

"Are you a socialist, Miss Claremont?" asked Eltham in mock alarm.

"I don't know what I am, Mr. Eltham," she replied seriously, "but I know what I am not, and that is a believer in the present order of affairs. It is better for us all to have an occupation, men and women, our capacity for pleasure would be broadened by lack of too much leisure."

Eltham cared little for these subjects, except in a casual way, he thought the evils of the world irredeemable and beyond any general regulation, and just at this moment the suffering of a world was too weird an air to be heard above the delicious melody now ringing in his soul.

"You are very fond of flowers," the girl said.

"I am fond of everything beautiful. And you love to surround yourself with animals, don't you?"

"Yes, I think the more animals we have around us, the more human we are."

General Claremont now broaches the subject of returning home.

Eltham lifts her into the saddle, her weight no greater than a pressure attended by the bounding spring with which she assists him.

"If you should be riding by to-night, drop in," said the general.

"Don't ride by—ride over," added his daughter.

"May I?"

"Nay, do."

"How kind you are," he said.

"No, I am only selfish," she responded.

Restive reared suddenly. Eltham sprang as if to grasp the rein, but she waved him away saying smilingly: "If you could see the runs and leaps I make him perform at times you would not start."

He runs his hand down the long glistening neck of the impatient animal, who breaks away to passade and cavort in a manner which makes the onlooker's brows knit, he does not fear she will be thrown, but dislikes these skittish antics that always contain an element of danger.

"You learned to ride abroad" he asked after the horse quieted down.

"In Paris."

"I thought so," he said.

"But one can learn to ride as skillfully here," she asserted.

"Not as gracefully though," was his answer.

With a few parting words they are off. He standing there, watches them with much the same sentiment she had felt at his leaving the day before, a dead unbroken hush seemed to reign throughout the whole place.

CHAPTER XIII.

Eltham felt as if all the sunlight of the day had gone.

Our hearts are too little at our command to love or hate as we may choose, and though miserable now, he would not have loved her less. Her smiles showed esteem for him, and when she bestowed her hand at parting had she again said, "Come," or was it the eagerness of his own heart he fancied had found expression on her lips.

A mirthless kind of sound escaped him as he thought how wholly poetic fancies were running riot within him.

"I must assume some interest in matters," he thought starting for the stable, but the sweet eyes floated before his face, defying forgetfulness.

He heard one of his men shout lustily to another, then strike into a rollicking Irish song. Pausing, he listened to the melody, then half smiled to himself at the fulsome brogue and devil may care words.

The bird which lit over her head now started its gay carol from the glade beyond; following its song he found himself again on the edge of the lake; leaping into the boat, he seated himself, noting the clear shallow depths minutely reflecting the leaves and specks of gleaming sky through the foliage.

Unloosing the chain and picking up the oars, with a few strokes of his powerful arms he shoots out almost to the middle of the lake.

She had not been gone a half hour and how he longed for a sight of her again. Yes, fate had brought them together.

The bird still sang as though it would burst its little throat, he looked upon it as a good omen, and began to whistle softly to himself, then to hum and finally found himself singing out in full voice as if in joyous opposition to the feathered songster, feeling a great wish to thank God for something, a great mistake averted ten years before, a common mistake which nearly always brings unpleasant if not fatal consequences, that of too early welding the chain of matrimony, which in seeking to find a vulnerable point to break the galling link, and satisfy the judge, too often ends in a serious scandal vexing the righteousness of truthful union.

Josephine Meldon was an attractive girl whom he met during college days; she was fifteen, he twenty. He could see her now, her pretty doll face framed in yellow curls, dimples which always appeared to him like little mouths asking to be kissed. Beside the simple and usual beauty of her face now rose the grand overpowering loveliness of Regina Claremont.

"My sweet love," he whispered to himself, then closed his eyes and smiled as he thought of his awful despair when Joe's folks had locked her up, and their wild dreams of elopement. Oh, fatal unguided step of willful hearts, that scorns the voice of experience;

girls, don't turn from your mother's prudent words, the fancy of your youth is seldom lasting.

Its heated blood has blasted more lives than sickness or disease.

Consider well!

Think, the hand you now clasp in eager longing, the lips that kiss your own in constant ardor, may smile on you, a wife, in sarcasm or contempt, utter a volley of vile epithets, hurl at your head a thunderous order of command, raise his hand and strike you to the floor. Yes, it is possible he might do this and statistics don't dispute that he can do more, at those times when your own sweet temper, we must add, puts in those little points of exquisite nagging, and injured sense of suffering, some women love to feel their own particular province.

Halt to read, both man and woman too, before that step which God, and all good men, alike declare, unchangeable.

Eltham had lived to see his first fancy married, and, to the world, happily so. But she was a vain and handsome creature, fond of admiration and such women are seldom contented with the compliments a husband gives. They met a couple of years after at a legation ball.

"Was she happy?"

"Indeed no, her husband was cold and indifferent, took more interest in business than in her, had a violent temper, was altogether intolerable. Would he come to see her, she was so lonely and unhappy, he could comfort her, brighten the dull hours of fashionable routine, would he not come?"

They were in the conservatory, two waving palms concealing them from the sauntering few, her face was raised in enticing expectancy, but he disappointed her.

He did not kiss, nor did he visit or meet her ever by appointment or design.

His sense of honor towards other men's wives was not a theory, he coveted no doubtful glory in the line of lady killer, smooth rogues who would raise their shoulders at an expressed sentiment against a recognized canon of "good breeding."

He would have killed without a moment's hesitation the man or woman who betrayed him; and believed that the one redress any honorable man could employ. There is nothing light, vain, or treacherous about this one, nothing to which a man must either play tyrant or victim; truth becomes a woman more than all else.

How that girl could love, could he win her? he could but try.

"It is the tender home feeling, this settled repose of affection that is the parent of true virtue and purest enjoyment after all," he said to himself, then repeated: "The treasures of the deep are not so precious as are the concealed comforts of a man locked up in woman's love. There is no happier lot, than to have a wife and children."

CHAPTER XIV.

That evening Regina heard the bell. Waiting for no ceremony, she bounded down the hall, opening the door, holding out both hands which he eagerly grasped, and held longer than in the morning.

She had been beautiful to him in the twilight dusk of their first meeting, in the amber curtained light of the day before, in the broad searching glare of the morning; but it seemed to him now that his eyes had never beheld anything so incomparably dazzling as at this moment, when she stood before him. His heart failed; could she be for him?"

He did not know how handsome he looked himself just then, but she did.

He would never forget her as she looked now, yet a simpler dress she could not have worn.

"Come in, come in!" she cried. And as they traverse the hall she adds: "We want you to join us in a game."

"Of what?"

"I'd better whisper it," she answered naively.

"Well," bending his head down while her lips just brush his ear.

"Poker."

Their cheeks touched slightly.



Looking at her snowy arms he thought, "Chains of love, shall I ever feel the link of your sweet fetters?"

She wore a dress of cream nun's veiling, white hyacinths at the belt.

They looked at each other a second after the whispered word.

It is said time will tell us what we can and cannot do, but time was a slow moving dragon here, that must be slain.

Entering the drawing-room they seated themselves by a little ebony table inlaid with agate and mother-of-pearl, the soft braids of her hair seeming to shame by their superior gloss the table on which she leaned one snowy arm. Looking at those arms he thought, "Chains of love, will I ever feel the link of your sweet fetters?"

"Do you play our American game?" she now asked.

"Yes, but you are the first lady with whom I have had that pleasure. Is it common among them here?"

"I believe not, but we prefer it to whist, and I win papa's money with a true gambler's love of gain. The stakes are very small," she finished with a gay laugh.

Eltham was a trifle nonplussed, here was a freedom contrary to all his former social experiences, this frank and independent spirit charmed him more and more.

"Your customs are so at variance—" he began.

"With what you have known," she interrupted with thoughtless impoliteness; "you will find plenty who are superlatively conventional, but we are a law unto ourselves and our neighbors scarcely know what to make of us, but we are so satisfactorily situated

financially, they doubtless call our independence 'quaint eccentricity' or 'droll originality.' I really do not know or care," she ended with grim sarcasm.

"A sensible arrangement in one's home, the etiquette of breeding, comes from a kind heart which must ever prompt the highest mandate of true politeness, regardless of form," he said. "But tell me of those adopted grandchildren your father spoke of. I have really been curious to have the mystery explained."

"Can I do so, Mr. Eltham, without causing you to think I wish to distinguish myself as a philanthropist, or that I seek a puny notoriety through the common fad of my class, charity?"

"Whatever you may do, Miss Claremont," (he wanted to say "darling," wanted to take her to his heart, and tell the love and longing he felt,) "I believe to be prompted by no motive but generosity, and loyalty itself, certainly your sense of duty and justice exceeds your years."

"Justice!" she answered, "there is no justice. I was born an heiress, too rich by far for my necessity or extravagantly acquired wants, another girl, hundreds and thousands of girls in every natural attribute my equal if not superior, are sent into a life of binding and degrading poverty, for poverty is degrading, the one enemy self respecting man most dreads. Your poverty is a crime as well as a degradation to-day. Who cares for you, when you have nothing? *Nobody!* Thank God! I have never had to work and battle with the world, but that fact but makes me doubly sympathetic for those who do. I have never put my

foot upon the necks of those whose obsequious nature and necessity humbled them before me. I would rather put my hand upon their heads and bid them look up to the light of knowledge coming nearer day by day. To such straights and measures are they reduced that you nor I, and men and women with a grain of power or becoming means are not doing their duty unless fighting for their redemption as a vital and a national issue. Oh, I will not fume, I will tell you of my babies, bright little cherubs gathered from the by-ways and ditches, created, and since they are so, must we not believe by the hand of God? There's no surplus of children in the homes of the rich, you know, nor the respectably poor. Affluence crushes the result of an instinct which poverty seems to foster. You look strangely at me, Mr. Eltham, are you surprised at these words, or sentiments? Sentiments every true woman should feel, truths they should all study and know."

"You both surprise and interest me, pray go on," he said seriously.

"If I have surprised and interested you, I may now shock you, and as I may not make easy gradations to the climax, be fully prepared to sustain any injury to what we call modesty, a false thing, so largely and uselessly cultivated, that we are blind to the promptings of the heart and a conscientious pursuance of duty."

"I can endure any pain you might inflict, speak openly to me, you will not be misunderstood," he said.

"I will speak openly. It is needless for me to say, I presume, that I have never been interfered with by any teachings or suppressions that would prevent my understanding what in common all girls should properly know as well as anyone else in the world, do you not agree with me?"

"I do," he answered, "and have frequently thought of the importance of various, not to say vital subjects, their best welfare demands should be wholly unfolded to them. But where can the line of limitation be drawn, and permit their innocence to remain?"

"There should be no lines drawn in the limitation of useful knowledge, for in that is woman's salvation, and we want innocence only in children. Purity, not innocence is all we need, and it is enough for mankind to require, and purity and correct knowledge, are both harmonious and consistent," she said.

Then in a few words she told him of her charges, the heart-breaking scenes with young innocent girls "which convinced me that innocence as we understand the word to-day is often a blighting form of ignorance; these, most of them young and trusting girls, betrayed and nonchalantly abandoned," she went on excitedly, "by wretches whose defiant knowledge of custom, a spurious safeguard, spurious as their black hearts that never peep from out the cover of a benignant smile permitting all things to themselves, *sin* in others, but experiment only for them. Lauding before the world the brilliant jewel chastity, sternly frowning in sweeping horror on all the guilty deeds of *female* human error. Society always, often the

law, protects them. But the woman, frail vessel of trust, may be dependence, approached and often intimidated by those who would not dare address one of his own class, yet easily expects or impudently demands the lowlier one should yield, employing all tricks of deception, falsehood and pretense, anything to compass design. In the end, why is a woman less worthy of love, respect and honor than he? Were a man to so wrong me!—”

“Don’t, don’t,” he answered hastily seizing her hand and making a movement as though to brush the table from between them, then he dropped it suddenly, and drew his handkerchief across his brow.

She continued:

“Rotten to the core are the hearts of these men, who, after a record whose deeds if known would bring the blush of shame to their own hardened faces, look for in their wives and too often receive innocence and truth. And they speak of love, the purest instinct of noble hearts, the vile empty shells in their breasts know but the meaning of depravity.”

Eltham’s heart kindled with a guilty reproach. True if he walked the world through he would be in no danger of meeting a sad eyed woman whose child would accuse him in the revengeful intensity of a later understanding as the criminal author of his chance being.

Regina was right, he thought of her as Regina, beautiful Reggie, then spoke somewhat apologetically, as if ashamed to try and defend his sex after this biting fusilade of eloquence, for he knew she was nearer the truth than was pleasant to hear.

"You know man is a whimsical mixture of good and evil, and though men and women were born alike, with the same inclinations, affections and restraints (morally we have the latter now) man would never be as pure as woman, nor will society ever demand that he shall be."

"Then until it does, Mr. Eltham, will the deception of my sex continue."

"There can be no comparison," he replied, "you must allow the honor of men and women is not the same, the fiat of society must control the woman, for she is a perpetual contradiction in herself; her truth or falsity must safely barricade or ruin the home; they are and must continue to be, the spotless shaft of our own honor's best protection."

"And the men?" with a shade of hauteur. "Will doubtless, deplorable as it is, continue to the end in the enjoyment of greater personal liberty."

Eltham felt insane to think he was fit to win her. What would he not have given, years of his life, to look into her face spotless as herself, she was a prize the highest might pride themselves in winning. He now, somehow, in a tumult of feeling, without his own volition, experienced the most abhorrent conjectures; she was his, this gracious queenly girl, who sat here gazing at him with a tenderness unmistakable. His forever, could he grow cold to her, complacently seek outside his own home the company of less deserving womanhood, and coming home meet with unruffled conscience those lips in smiling confident greeting? false to the best instinctive teachings of heart, to her loyal fidelity?

She sat nearest the fire, shading her face with a delicate screen, tilting it between her long ringless fingers, saying, "Tell me a ghost story, or legend, Mr. Eltham, a real creepy one," while his thoughts like malignant demons grip at his heart. The air seems heavy with unseen voices, seem to hem him in at every turn of the mind breathing, suspicion, deception and guilt.

Then comes a blasphemous and intrusive one that shakes his heart and soul in its withering clutch.

In sickening anguish he closed his eyes, but his brain would not be tranquilized, it throbbed the thought that she, smarting under the sting of a real or fancied indifference, had returned in the arms of another, the caresses she thought his own no longer willingly bestowed.

Would she be one to descend to vulgar duplicity, "watch for a convenient moment to escape from her home, covering her face with a double veil, and return calmly to play an ignoble comedy?" or would there be "but one step from the highest to the lowest, honesty in her fall and courage in her shame." He could not check or silence the demon thought, she might it persisted, even the high and noble had fallen might not she too, as well as they? Why not, she was a woman, and all the lovable ones are weak, it is said. He could not continue, his head grew dizzy at his brain's unholy suggestions. A groan escaped him as he closed his eyes with an expression of deep pain.

"What is it, what is the matter?" she asked, spring-

ing to her feet and holding out her hands as if in unconscious entreaty; he could only think, "I want to receive her now, take her to me forever under my own protection and love." Forcing a smile to his face he answered:

"I feel better, it was nothing, I assure you."

Ah yes, if a thought could breed such unapproachable agony of mind, it was right indeed to annex infamy to the loss of honor, in either man or woman. Honor of itself rightly, should know or be controlled by no law or circumstance, sex or condition, but prevail through its own force and truth, through all conditions and all time.

His emotions almost forced him at the moment to speak, but restraining himself he thought, "she would call it folly, madness."

Yet, would she. Who can say and prove it is not wisdom to allow the impulses of the heart unchecked latitude when only noble thoughts control the spring of action.

He vowed this moment as he had many times before to himself, that fortune should soon favor him in the bestowal of this girl a bride.

Rallying as if to break the silence he was happily spared the necessity by the entrance of the general, whose face combined with its smile of welcome an expression which plainly said, "I understand the situation here." But he didn't understand it exactly.

Pinching his daughter's burning cheek he laid his paper aside, asking jovially, "Well, Mr. Eltham, do you play our game?"

“I do indeed, sir, and I may say with almost, if not quite, the zest and pleasure of a native born.”

CHAPTER XV.

Now the cards are brought out, and they all draw up to the little ebony table, with the constraint of a moment before gradually disappearing.

Regina shuffles them and with a decidedly professional air and tone exclaims: "Cut for deal. I am a real gambler," she continued laughing. "You are the banker, papa!"

She still seemed a little nervous or confused, Eltham thought, as he looked earnestly at her, her voice was slightly tremulous, her clear eyes troubled, those eyes that few could look into their beautiful depths, and not feel the strange charm of their fascination. Two bright spots burned on her cheeks, his wild looks and actions had upset her. Was she offended, she had not looked at him, but avoided his glance he fancied. Making a hasty movement, he attracted her notice. The general stooped to pick up a card, and leaning forward he whispered: "You will forgive my singular behavior I trust, won't you?" He had felt at the time like a fierce tiger battling with the demon his imagination had so insanely conjured up.

Her only reply was an expression eloquent of her inward feelings, she felt now that nothing could ever supplant the love in her heart for this man, the



A heart full of kindness for all living things.

delirium seemed to warn her finer sensibilities, the knowledge of the strength of her passion sobered, and, for the moment, almost saddened her, could there be a barrier, this happiness itself was almost pain.

The click, click, of the ivory chips on the ebony giving forth that hard metallic sound alone broke the silence then a satisfied ejaculation from the general.

Dombey came up and in mute friendliness raised one huge paw and was about to place it on the delicate dress of his mistress, but she quietly put it aside, and with a gentle assurance of favor, in the form of a few kind words, the great creature sank with a contented sigh at her feet.

Eltham, raising rather unproportionately on a pair of kings and sevens, notes every little movement, conveying as it does to him growing evidence of her absolute kindness to all living things.

"I shall proceed to call you, Mr. Eltham," she said with a gayety and smile whose momentous intimation might be construed to imply that her doing so was but magnanimity, and the laying down of the hands for inspection, an unnecessary formality, as the jack-pot was already hers.

The general had dropped out after the third round.

"Your kings and sevens are rather pretty, but aces and jacks more symmetrical as well as decisive," she laughed, sweeping them in with a dash containing just a tinge of that almost malicious delight usually inseparable from the spirit of the woman winner at the poker table, even when the maximum figure of limitation is one nickel.

"Deal 'em, papa! You're shy a chip there, Mr. Eltham, I want to win everything on the board," and they all laugh at this sally.

"I wouldn't have called you, Mr. Eltham, had I been sure you quite understood the game," Regina continued.

Eltham highly gratified at the badinage of her tone, entered into the spirit of the hour, heartily responding:

"I should have stood an unlimited raise from you, Miss Claremont, for I am almost sure, at least I suspect you capable of a good game of bluff."

"Indeed she is," laughed the general, "she'd steal your last nickel with a bobtail flush, yes, yes, call her every time that's my advice, Mr. Eltham."

"Papa you mean thing let me win some of his money learning my play, won't you?" she said, adding: "Wait till I tell you what he did one night: he bet every chip he had on three deuces, and when I called him, one of his deuces was a tray, and he always declared he discarded the other at the draw, but I never quite believed it."

"You rogue," said the general.

"Cut 'em, pa!"

Now they all look silently at their hands.

"Cards! how? what! not any, not one? hear that, Mr. Eltham, standing pat, and between you and me I doubt if he's got a pair or better. Remember, this is queens or better."

The game waxes warm, a poker table is a great leveler of sentiment for the time being.

"I shall get the children's winter clothing tomorrow, and you gentlemen should feel great pleasure at the direction the fickle goddess points her finger, as the money will be used for a laudable purpose."

In jest and happy laughter the time flies rapidly by. Presently the general touches a bell.

"A bottle of 42, Henry."

"Yes, sir."

Click, click, click, the red white and blue are heaped in scattered profusion on the table.

Regina suddenly gives a little feminine shriek, how a woman loves to gamble, how much better she loves to win.

The betting is growing animated now.

"Take your foot off my chair, papa, do you want to break my luck? get up and walk around yours, Mr. Eltham!"

"You witch," said her father, "I believe you stack the cards."

"Change decks!" she cried.

This was the superstitious cue for another burst of merriment that roused Dombey from his dreams; sitting up he looked from one to the other in sleepy reproach for their lack of consideration for his slumbers, then spreading his great jaws in a guttural yawn, he sank back on the floor as Henry entered with the wine.

The general, thinking it time to close the game, called.

Regina gave a little moue of disappointment, but laid down her hand with a bright twinkle of antago-

nism in her eye. The general held three aces and backed up his convictions pretty disastrously.

Eltham a queen, full wholly, justifying his play, Regina a royal flush which she laid down with all a woman's exclamation points and enthusiasm, raking in the pot with the avidity of a Monte Carlo habitue.

"Look, Mr. Eltham, papa! I held up these three, nine, ten, jack, and filled, consecutively too—" and clapping her hands together, she jumped up, threw her arms around the general's neck, giving him a sudden kiss, then stepping with a little elastic bound over the dog, trips to the piano and breaks out merrily, "Bravo, victorious ones, see your foes defeated fall."

"Will you forgive me for holding all the good hands, Mr. Eltham, I am not a bit of a philosopher when I lose, I assure you, don't I get glum, papa?"

"You get mad," he answered.

"Not really mad, papa!"

"Yes, you do, I've seen you when you would hardly say good-night after losing twenty-five cents."

"Oh, Mr. Eltham, you don't believe that, do you?"

"Yes," he answered, "I'm afraid I do."

Wine and biscuit are served and they chat for a while under the warmth of Bacchus, the eyes of these already lovers seem to telegraph messages of hope and expectation.

Ten o'clock. He must go, go to pass another night of doubly anxious longing after the communicated happiness of her manner to-night. The general bids him good night with a cordial invitation to come often.

Regina walks down the long hall by his side, Dombey at their heels.

"Come often and get robbed," she said trying still to keep up the evening's light tone of gayety, but could not; they were alone.

"Did you lose very heavily?" she inquired with feigned solemnity.

"Very heavily," he returned, then in a half whisper, "I lost all to-night, but in future may I hope to win?"

"I will give you a chance to do so," she answered steadily.

"And will there be no one else in the game?"

"Only papa," in a low tone.

"One must hold the cards."

"In this game they must," she answered.

"And you will not bluff?"

"Never."

At these words she could not still the throbbing of her heart. "He loves me, he loves me," it kept repeating.

He looked for her eyes, they were downcast. Could he have done so, he would have qualified his present pain only by adding to it, by placing those arms about his neck, intensified it by feeling the pressure of the beautiful head on his heart, laying the soft cheek against his own, the lips—but could it be, would the present joy or memory of it after, be worth the pain of parting.

They must part, and often before they could wed, but he resolved this moment it should not be long, one month should not pass before she should be his, his wife, his very own.

The blood of a passionate indiscretion ran riot in their veins.

They pass out onto the verandah, the sharp air chills her, stepping back into the hall, he takes a warm shawl and wraps it tenderly about her.

She gives a little sigh, eloquent in its involuntary longing, their hands meet and clasp and, drawing near to each other, they look up at the stars which seem like diamond lamps hung up in the dome of a great cathedral.

"Might she not say with the brook," said Regina looking at the moon, "'men may come and men go, but I go on forever.'" Then changing her tone quickly cried. "Look, Mr. Eltham; see, that light across the meadow, that's where my babies are, and may I while I live bear in mind their helplessness; condemned and forlorn, breathing emblems of circumstance, as I look into their innocent faces beaming with all the love of their little hearts, may mine become iron, my will steel to strike on every hand the infamous conditions which permit and abet their misfortunes; and though vain and weak as the beating of a fly against the pane, I would, though accomplishing nothing, still feel the humble measure of my doing had not been all in vain."

"Have you fully considered all the possibilities the entire responsibility of these children must entail?"

"I have, are you not in sympathy with me, with them?" she asked.

"In a measure, yes, but life is a stormy and eventful track at best we cannot seem to transform it, and

indeed many demonstrate daily, with everything to live for, that existence is not worth enduring whatever its benefits, time only can tell if you performed an act of charity in rescuing them from an early death, which your care doubtless did for most of them."

"Bertrand Eltham, are you a pessimist?"

The name passed her lips, as if she had spoken it every day of her life.

"No, not exactly, Regina."

She could not discern his face in the darkness, but the inexpressible tenderness with which he had uttered her name. Yes she *must* draw her hands away, it was too sweet.

About to do so, his but renew a firmer hold, for a second only, then he released them and passed slowly down the steps.

"Good night," he called gently.

"Good night, keep your horse to the right and drive carefully, just beyond the turn the road has caved in. Good-night, again."

With thanks and assurances of care regarding the point he is gone. The vehemence of the love within her was struggling with a mighty force and she cried out on the still night air, "Eltham, do not go, do not leave me yet!" then she felt ashamed and called aloud to the dog beneath the trees running down and out onto the lawn as if in jubilant mischief.

Luckily he had not heard her words. Pausing to hear the roll of wheels die away, she entered the house and softly closed the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

The picture of a life with and for him, was now the one thought of all consciousness. Returning to the drawing-room she walked up to her father and cuddled close around his neck, while something suspiciously like tears shone in her eyes.

A little sniff caused him to draw her around and look inquiringly into her face.

"What for?" he asked.

"I cannot tell, it is a struggle for me to subdue myself, my heart is redolent of a problem scarcely a compliment to my womanhood. Father, I am ashamed of myself, ashamed of this craving for an entire stranger."

"And I am ashamed of you, Reggie, this energy of fancy is too pronounced, I fear it will prove a delusion. What if he should not return this love?"

"He will, he does return it, but the shortness of our acquaintance, prevented him from declaring it to-night, I am sure of it."

"You are excited, go to bed now, and remember, we know nothing of this man, that he is a gentleman no one can doubt, but these alarming symptoms of yours must go through a severe winnowing process, and become amenable to my decision concerning the chaff or grain of their composition. This seems to

be a crisis with you, my child, when youth and folly would commingle to wrest through nature, results your whole future life might deplore" wait till you know him better, wait until you know yourself. Where is my sensible girl of a few days ago?"

A mist swam before her eyes for a second, never before had her father spoken so seriously to her, she buried her head on his shoulder, he stroked her hair, and after a moment, when calmer, she raised her head saying:

"You are right, father, have no fear, this unaccountable feeling shall be overcome, this signal change in my character nullified or brought to rational submission. My heart shall yield to reason's logic no matter what its pain."

She lingered no longer. "Good night, father, who so fit to counsel me as you, I shall never forfeit the respect a true daughter owes an honorable father."

She ascended to her room, imbued with the sense of duty she owed her father, herself, and the man she loved, her ears escaping the deep sigh which issued from his lips at the close of her words.

One fact came calmly to her brain. Marriages contracted in such distracted fancies, usually ended in hostility and coldness, if not separation.

A mortifying feature now occurred to her, that she had already committed herself to Eltham, still she tried to mollify her conscience by the fact that no words had been spoken, forgetting those few, of such direct tenor, and her own agile and literally correct adaptation of them.

The clock chimed eleven.

Slipping off the creamy gown it fell apart from its silken lining and lay in a shining, inanimate mass at her feet, then she adjusts a pair of comfortable slippers, and, sitting in her snowy night-gown before the fire, leant upon her hand in a long and pre-occupied dream, but joy effaced all other thoughts, for she believed now that he loved her too.

At breakfast the next morning, both father and daughter were equally surprised to have Mr. Eltham announced.

"Show him right in here," said the general.

He stood at the door smiling.

It seemed to her, no woman could have known and not loved him, yet he was free. Something whispered there could be but one woman for this man, and that one he had never met, her heart gladly sanctioned any argument which seemed an evidence that he was meant for her alone.

"You bring the fresh air with you," she said taking his extended hand and drawing him down by her side.

"Yes," he returned after greeting the general, "fresh air and a little news also."

"You'll have a cup of coffee, won't you?" she asked.

"Well, yes, I will since you are so good as to ask me," he answered lightly.

"You know a woman's curiosity don't you, now what's the news?"

"My early morning call is to say good-bye," he resumed, "as I leave on the one o'clock train for the west."

Regina started with a half gasping breath, while a fierce pang at the heart made her color and grow pale.

"Will you be away long?" she faltered.

No change of her face or voice, escaping his watchful eye.

"Two weeks at least," he replied.

"Not longer?" in a tone that seemed half coaxing authority, not lost on Eltham.

"Even less, if I can possibly do so," he returned.

He now explained at a question from the general that a despatch received that morning concerning the sale of a large tract of land in the west, called him thither.

Sauntering into the drawing-room he was saying to her again: "I shall make my stay as brief as the business will allow, and may I be encouraged by the hope that I shall be remembered?"

"Need you ask?"

"I want the assurance."

"You would never be forgotten," she said, looking intently at him. "Shall we hear from you?"

"Often," he replied.

"I am sure you will enjoy the journey," she said looking away.

"No pleasure could equal what I have known in the past two days," he answered.

"In what?" she questioned almost in a whisper.

"In meeting you," he said seriously.

Like creatures mesmerized, they both yielded; no longer trying to subdue this power stronger than their own wills.

"How often will you write?" he asked.

"How often will you?" she returned.

"Every day, and you?"

"I will answer every letter."

There was a slight pause, and then a burst of merriment as had never before been heard within the old halls of Brightwood.

"She is mine, mine," and his brain became confused by the repetition that galloped through its maze.

Yet with all his excitement he was looking quietly at her, robed in a long tan morning gown of soft material, with richly corded and embroidered sleeves, an unique filigree belt with mosaic jeweled clasps, in her hair loosely curled and piled like a jetty helmet around her head, a half-blown rose.

As they stood there together, words seemed to strain their bonds in efforts to break from the lips of each, words of love, a passionate, happy yearning love, words of longing that brought a torturing pang, words of hope, whose gleaming star they both now fondly dreamed of seeing, of anticipation, which in their breasts bore no lurking shadow that reality could unveil, words expressing every thought to bring the glow of pleasure and, alas, the sad and fateful word, farewell!

For every "good-bye has the shadow of death." They but felt the unity of joy, however, the promising mystery of the future obscured by a necessary delay.

The sweet-scented air filled the room, how close they seemed to each other, the very atmosphere

around them vibrated in perfect harmony of union. How close, aye too close, the poetry and illusion of another moment would surely level every barrier of discretion.

Since the evening before he had that jealous feeling of protecting affection which was at once a joy and menace to his peace of mind.

Fumbling in artificial interest with the jeweled clasp of her belt, not daring to lift her face to the plainly speaking radiance of his eye.

"She is like a perfectly tuned instrument;" he thought, not trying to conceal the admiration in his glance, responding to the slightest touch, her manner, look, voice, and speech, are expressed though and in concurrence with the harmony within."

Regina's head had not been filled with weird and magic tales of enchantment or pageantry, knights and chivalry, which stimulate to excessive romance the untutored brain of the young, but his whole aspect of mind and unpretentious elegance imparted to her mind how gallant and truly noble he would appear with, "cloak and plumes and housings, and the stir of jeweled bridle and of golden spur."

She felt his hand on her hair, he gently removed the opening rose, "to give me something beside the phantom thought to take with me," he whispered.

Their hearts beat violently, intoxicated they manifestly forgot their surroundings, everything at that rapturous moment, but each other.

There was a sound like the birds stirring in the ivy outside the window, he tried in vain to concen-

trate every effort to resistance, the attraction was irresistible, they abjured the vigilance of wisdom, he raised both arms the movement full of entreaty. A half-faltering, half-eager step, another and stronger, impregnate with the bravery of her love, his arms were closing around her, her head sinking lower and lower till it lay upon his breast, they were borne away transformed, and, rudely awakened to the present time and place by the cheery voice of General Claremont just outside the door; there was no start of guilty apprehension, he dropped his arms, she raised her head, and they stood looking calmly into each others eyes and thus the general found them.

This time he understood the situation. Eltham experienced a vague feeling of revulsion at his daring intrepidity but turning easily, he talked at some length, on the circumstances of his going.

For once immediate speech failed Regina. She knew now that he loved her, yet the paroxysm of transport she felt was slightly marred by a half-slumbering reproof. But she would not listen to it, life with him would be a festival of unstinted love and happiness. They would marry and very soon, long engagements were a bore, often worse, they cooled youthful ardor, hers should not be checked by so foolish a formality, she wished to marry him now, to-day, this morning, at once.

The old saw "marry in haste," came to her mind, she dispelled it with more courage than prudence.

"I am not like other girls," she thought, "I do love him, I will not repent at leisure or repent at all.

How can I live with him away two weeks?"

Then she mentally called herself to the bar of a searching examination.

"Are you wise?" said the reason.

"I love him;" said the heart.

"For his beauty?"

"I do not know, I love him."

"Who is he?"

"I do not care, I repeat again, I love him."

"What is he?"

"He is now *all* to me that is enough for me to know.

"But if an obstacle—"

"There must, there *shall* be none, I love him, love him, love him, to all your catechising conscience, Reason, Wisdom, I make but one reply, said Heart: "I love him with all my soul."

CHAPTER XVII.

It seems but usual destiny that they should grieve and bend or break, when too defiant in demands, these hearts of ours.

He was saying good-bye to her father already. Was he really going so soon? yes, now, for he was holding her hand, she heard, she was sure, his voice say, "a letter every day," but that was all for the time.

When she opened her eyes again both Eltham and her father held a hand, and there was a strong pungent odor in the room.

"Why Reg!" said her father, "is this the girl who boasts of steel and iron in her composition? Dear old sweetheart, she don't know herself, does she?"

"Don't, papa," she said and stopped as if not to trust her voice further.

They saw it would take but a word to make her weep.

Eltham did not speak.

They had both fully awakened to something new and hitherto unknown to each.

He dropped on one knee by her side. She shivered a little but not with cold, then opened her lips to speak, he also was about to say something, simultaneously they pause, 'twere better not said yet.

She closed her eyes, General Claremont was drawing the shutters, one of the lace curtains caught, he stopped to disengage it, his back to them. Eltham pressed her hand, raised it to his lips, one two, aye, a dozen kisses, and rising abruptly to his feet he said farewell.

Regina did not stir, but as she heard her father wishing him a safe return and close the hall door, to which he had accompanied him, she buried her head in the satin cushions and burst into tears.

Returning, the general drew up a chair and sat down by her in silence.

At length she said: "Papa, did you ever love any one before you met mamma?"

"Your dear mother was my first true love, Reggie."

"Had you ever seen anyone you thought you loved before?" she continued.

"All men may have a dozen fancies, child, but only one true love."

"And may a woman have a dozen fancies and only one true love? How can we tell if it be the true, on what hypothesis can we assert the passion genuine and lasting, for only with the first can we expect the last. Do you think that I really love Eltham? I *know* I do this moment, but may not the knowledge of to-day prove a deception of to-morrow? Is there such a thing as *knowledge* when applied to the affections, how can we swear that we *will* love any one forever, how do we know that we *can*? That is the marriage ritual love, honor, obey, *for life!* honor and obey may be possible, the latter any way, but should

we ever *dare* to swear to love till death? Should they dare to do that? and yet I would now swear to love him through all eternity, *now*, now, do you hear me, father, through all eternity, and that word is blank to computation."

"Reggie, Reggie, try to sleep, you alarm me!" said her fond father.

"Sleep! I want to talk; talk of him, of Eltham, of Bertrand, talk of nothing, think of nothing, dream of nothing, but him."

Not replying to her wild words he sat in silence; all the past came before him once again. Why had he not told her, yet why should he tell her, how a secret galls when kept from one we love. Would she forgive him that sin, the one above all others she despised?

He looked down at her as she lay one hand under her flushed cheek the other still fingering with the jeweled clasp at her belt.

"Is there more wrong or danger in spoken words than actions may imply?" she questioned suddenly. "Silence is not golden, it is cold, pale silver, there is cruelty in words withheld."

There was no cruelty in withholding the words on his lips, and they should never be spoken. She should marry this man in due season.

"You shall suit yourself, Reggie, I believe in your judgment since you are so convinced of your love."

"Dear, dearest papa! I have told you every thought of my heart, I know he loves me in return."

"He couldn't help it, my darling," her doting father

answered, thinking as he looked at her how her mother had filled him with a whirlwind of love, ambition and often unreasonable jealousy.

Regina inherited her spirit from the general, her beauty and charm, from her mother, though General Claremont was a handsome man. Macie came in with a bunch of brilliant dahlias and placing them in a vase at Regina's elbow stood awaiting direction.

"Go down to the cottage, Macie, and have the children brought up to spend the day," her heart would not let her forget them even in its new great love.

Now more herself she felt a burning tinge of shame that she had so plainly revealed her feelings by falling unconscious at the thought of a brief separation.

"Did I fall, papa?" she now asked.

"No, Eltham prevented that, whether he expected it or not he seemed prepared."

"I shall be ashamed to see him again," she said in a tone of vexation, then questioned again:

"Had his manner a tenderness he might not have bestowed on any one under like circumstances? How did he act? what did he say?"

"He said nothing, but acted as if had you two been alone there—"

"Now, now, are those kisses for your old father, or his words."

"Both, you best of good fathers."

"I presume if I had not been here he might not have kissed your hand at parting."

"Did you see that, father?"

"Yes, saw and heard."

"Well, was it wrong, or would it have been even had it been—the other?"

"It would have been unwise at least," returned the general.

"No, no, it would have been right, for he is loyal, noble, possessed of no sentiment but honesty and goodness. Can you not read his character in his face? It would not have been wrong," she ended with an excited and fervent sigh, which evidently personified her settled convictions of fate regarding their lives.

The children now arrived, and lying on the couch, they romped and played about her absorbed in their little joys and pastimes. Now and again she would close her eyes and muse in a sort of sensual drifting, without intention or analysis, whether it were a delight of brain or emotion which occupied her, rapid pleasing rebellions, blissful thoughts, poetic delights of a casual fancy, whirling wildly hither and thither, fleet as a second's duration, then vanishing to reappear, broken yet scarcely interrupted, melodious with the breath of happiness, impregnate with the volatile essence and perfume of love.

Her face veiled in this languorous reverie, what a miracle of tenderness was the witchcraft of this passion, how much of the adventurous, gallant and poetic there was in his character; had he lived in the earlier days, popular traditions of bravery, and romantic legends of great deeds, doubtless embellished by the genius of the narrator, would have been handed

down to posterity. How uninviting indeed are pure facts, much of the pith and charm of history is the fiction it embraces. Some historians make Mary Stuart's life a romantic martyrdom of poesy, the fettered soul of a saint, she *was*, revolting, a fanatical if queenly martyr, a false, wicked, unwomanly, woman and queen.

A woman's heart contains greater mysteries than even magic can explain.

Eltham was now far on his journey, and did he think of her? the brief moment he had held her in his arms had not once left his mind, he held her still in a sentient memory, which made no endeavor to escape its enchanting bondage.

At the coming on of the evening Regina sat down at the organ. The solemn tones of the instrument filling the place with an air of holiness. Improvising strains that revived her soul, an eloquent perpetuation and communion in that higher potentiality of inspiration consecrated by nature to the organism sanctified by the attainment of ideality.

The children listen in the nurses' arms, sitting in quiet interest, while Holly pulls up an arm chair by her side and seems enraptured with the melody.

And now they are going, a loving good-bye, a kiss all around and they are gone.

As she closed her eyes to sleep, she thought, what one has known and loved, will live forever in the brain.

* * * * *

Four days passed, with every day a letter couched

in most friendly terms, no word of love. This morning he wrote:

"My trip has not been entirely barren of hostile incident. On leaving the train at Chicago, I was accosted by a hungry, ragged and altogether miserable looking wretch, who begged so humbly and piteously to carry my traps, consisting of my satchel and gun (for I brought that along thinking there might be some sport still on the prairie) that I waived through his urgent importunities the services of the porter and permitted him to carry the things up to the L——, where I usually make my headquarters. Ordinarily, my suspicions would have been aroused for he was a low-browed, cowardly looking specimen.

"Proceeding to the elevator, I noticed as I turned after entering, that he was looking at the register. I attached no importance to it, however, and being worn out, I retired early, after sending a line to you; falling asleep I dreamed of some one far away; from that pleasant rest I was awakened by a creaking sound, and opening my eyes, you can fancy my consternation to see a man half way through the transom.

"I let him enter sufficiently far to make escape difficult, and knowing every thief is a possible murderer, I slipped my hand under the pillow to feel sure of my revolver and then asked if he had made a mistake in the room or person. He evidently thought he had made a mistake in both as he did not reply. When uncovering my weapon I ordered him to light the gas, in trembling fear he obeyed and you may not be surprised to learn that it was the wreck who brought my luggage from the station.

"How he entered the hotel was a mystery at the time, for his appearance was enough to cause his arrest, but we learned after he had entered from an adjoining roof.

"Still covering him with my revolver, I rang and had him taken into custody. As he lit the gas under fear of my command I noticed he concealed something, telling the watchman whom the bell-boy summoned he demanded it. A bottle of chloroform proved that he entertained the fear that I might be troubled with insomnia or need some inducement to sleep to the successful termination of his enterprise. I made no complaint for he was apparently one of those men unfortunate in capacity, though possibly a criminal through preference. I heard later who he was or had been, a sort of pettifogging lawyer who never reached the dignity in his practice of affording an office outside his hat and being unfitted to the profession he turned his mind to a more congenial occupation. The proprietor was not so lenient as myself and the impression is that he is good for two years at Joliet, for it seems this is not his only offense. His name was Chas. Bradly or Chester Bradford or something similar. I took little interest to remember.

"Don't let your sympathies dwell with regret on his prospective punishment, for I assure you prisons were built for just such rascals, the air of its discipline is the only air they can freely breathe.

"I start north to-morrow, and shall soon be on the home stretch. Need I say how impatiently I hope

for the hour and the great pleasure awaiting me of a call once more to Brightwood.

“Yours in Sincerity,

“ELTHAM.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

Eltham had been home three days. The morning after his arrival his groom came to Brightwood with a note, inviting its mistress to ride, and a part of each day since had been spent in a like manner.

It was the twenty-fifth of October, a warm beautiful day, they had been riding some hours.

Now standing, looking off at the Palisades, those rugged heights which extend along the western shore of the Hudson for a distance of thirty-five miles.

Never tired of discussing the grandeur of the scenery, the beauty and magnificence of the river, its political and social history. That the discoverer often crept into their talks was but natural.

"Who can fathom," she said this afternoon, "after the elements had so fiercely disputed his passage at every turn, the joy, wonder, and hope of Hudson as he sailed through the Narrows into our present New York bay, and from his anchorage beheld the rippling waters of the noble river flowing from the blue hills on the north."

"No one," returned Eltham, "yet how that joy must have sunk to despair, could so stout a heart as his yield, when he entered the stream on the following day, fully persuaded on account of the tidal cur-

rents that the river flowed from ocean to ocean, to find as the highlands fifty miles from the sea were passed that the stream narrowed and freshened."

"Yes," Regina replied, "but must he not have felt as though transfigured into some mysterious hero of the old sagas of the North, at the deputations of dusky Indians who in wonder and awe came from the courts of the forest to visit him?"

Standing on this eminence, they fancied they could almost discern the clustering peaks of the distant and shadowy Adirondacks.

Passing along the margin of the river they would ride hours over the hills amidst the wildest mountain scenery, sometimes exchanging a wish, half earnest, for the novelty to dwell for a time in the heart of the forest. Living upon trout and venison the common food of the wilderness.

She glanced sidewise at him, how nobly he sat his handsome horse. Imagine him in stout shirt, coarse trousers and heavy boots, soft felt hat or cap, how picturesque he would be in anything, stalking home with some wild thing over his shoulder, herself preparing the supper of game or fish by the huge fire camped by a rippling cascade, solitude unbroken save by their own voices, or that of a wild deer hound dashing by.

The ground strewn with the delicate sprays of the hemlock and balsam, making a sweet and pleasant bed. Then wrapped in blankets, sit in the darkness hand in hand watching the play of fire or moonlight, in the languid ease of a satisfied present.

All this would be a rude but fascinating life.

Such were some of the thoughts they exchanged this afternoon, riding slowly along, with enthusiastic comments on the gorgeous cloud pictures, which produced a scene such as the eye seldom beholds.

But suddenly the sun became hidden, the vision faded, thick clouds came rolling over the mountains presaging a heavy storm. It grew intensely dark, the hills around presenting a magnificent appearance in the weird gloom.

Above the boulders which partially formed a rocky bluff, they beheld an ominous flash of lightning, immediately another sullen roll which seemed to shake the very earth.

What was to be done, fully eleven miles from home, near no habitation. They could not reach home certainly before the storm broke, they must try for the nearest farm-house.

Both horses feeling a little fresh from the loitering ramble struck out in springing leaps across the country.

Absorbed in the one thought of reaching a place of shelter, both riders were silent. A splash of rain warned them of the near approach of the storm, a few moments more and the swift whirling rain causes them to halt in consultation.

Eltham looking about, suddenly remembered a little cabin he had noticed some time before, which had evidently been built for the shelter of some woodsmen. It couldn't be over a mile, and at his proposition that they seek it, his companion gladly assented.

The wind was rising almost to a tornado, the rain coming in rapid sheets. They must turn back a little, the thunder and lightning now followed each other in rapid succession almost deafening and blinding in its fury.

To reach the hut they must go through the forest for some distance.

Eltham rode ahead, Restive balking a little at the unaccustomed pass.

He turned to take the bridle, as he had done once before in his yard at Baisely, but Regina would not permit it even here.

"He shall follow where your horse leads," she said.

Through scraggy trees and thick wild shrubbery, over streams fringed with delicate brake and fern, over the most difficult ground imaginable with dead trees and logs lying everywhere, some charred and burned, others lying prone with their black rugged roots pointing in all directions. Through this labyrinth they pick their way down a steep, winding path, they reach the rustic spot snugly hidden away under the lee of a hill.

Thoroughly wearied they hailed it thankfully. Eltham jumped to his feet.

"This is not so bad," he said, leading her through the narrow door at which he had to stoop, but she passed through unscathed, her head just came to his chin, she noticed now.

Eltham constructed a comfortable place for her to sit, by removing her saddle, and placing it across a piece of timber. She was drenched and her teeth

chattered with the cold and chill of her wet habit. He noticed how wet it was as he lifted her down, seating her, he looked around for some wood.

Gathering the twigs together that had been blown in during the fall gales, and placing a large pile of logs that had been but little damped, he soon had a blazing fire.

Regina thought it the pleasantest thing she had ever known, this fire, this solitude. His handsome form moving about in the shadowed light with now and then a jocular remark and witty phrase regarding the conveniences at hand, trying to make things cheerful.

He led the horses to the side which offered the most protection, tying his under a spreading oak, and Restive under another, some distance apart and from the cabin.

Under these trees which seemed to cling to their leafage longer than the others, they suffered little from the storm. He then returned, bringing his saddle and the two blankets which they had fortunately used that day.

He laid the saddle down in a corner and walked up to the fire, removing his gloves and stretching his hands out towards the inviting warmth, his bronze, red beard changing to ruddy gold in the flickering light. Regina tried to keep up her spirits as she asked the time, expressing the wish that the storm would soon pass.

Eltham looked at his watch, it was quarter past three.

The storm seemed to increase in fury. Drawing up his saddle he stood looking at her a moment, and then sat down by her side.

What expressive eyes, he was everything a lover should be. Her saddle was mounted a little above him, and as he now looked up into her face, she turned her eyes to the fire and shivered slightly.

In a second his hand was on her shoulder.

"How careless of me," he cried, "you will get your death; here take my coat, it is perfectly dry inside."

"But my waist is wet through, it will dry quicker left uncovered."

"You must not permit it to dry on you!"

"What else can I do?"

"Remove it," he said, his eyes and tone expressing deep regard for her health. "Certainly you should, you must, you cannot let so serious a matter pass, as a possible injury to your health, through the fear you may display immodesty, or commit an unpardonable breach of etiquette, take off your waist."

How could she, yet her reason told her it was but sensible and right, if not imperative. Yet she hesitated.

They had already been here twenty minutes, and the storm seemed even worse if anything. She unfastened a button, why should she pause, how many strong constitutions had been wrecked by a cold taken under such circumstances. She was quiet so long he turned from the door to which he had walked, and asked, "Why do you hesitate, Regina?"

That was the second time he had ever called her by that name.

"I hesitate," she answered, rallying, "through childishness, a mawkish sentiment I above all others should be ashamed of, now; give me one more chance to make my toilet," she said smiling, and he turned again with an answering smile, tapping a tattoo accompaniment on the edge of the opening that served as a door.

He heard the sound of the unbuttoning dress, and a low laugh as she slipped her hands through the sleeves of his coat, and crossed its ample widths in double breasted folds and secured them with her long hat pin.

"There's a difference in the fit, but doesn't it feel more comfortable?" he said as he turned.

"Very much, indeed," she replied.

"Now hang your waist across those pegs—no, give it to me," and taking it from her hand he spread it across the pegs, saying as the steam rose from its warm surface, "that will soon be dry."

"Feel warmer now?" he said, seating himself in his old place at her feet.

This was a moment he had prayed for, to sit with her just like this, away from all the world.

"I feel perfectly warm and comfortable now," she said.

"Are you happy, too?" he asked.

"Very, very happy."

What a fond delightful moment to them both. Fate had misplaced nothing.

"Who could have dreamed of such an ending to the day. Are you disappointed, Reggie? are you?"

Her father's pet name; with what a world of love he spoke it.

She looked through the door space, at the tree capped hills.

Every word that fell from his lips touched her heart.

The wind wails around them swaying the frail structure in its fierce power.

One of the horses neighed, recognizing it, she said:

"Restive is afraid."

Reaching up he took her hand saying, "Are you afraid?"

"No, I am not afraid with you here."

He pushed back the long sleeve of his coat bearing the white wrist, and following her eyes with his own through the aperture, he laid his bearded cheek upon her hand in silence.

"This is happiness; sing to me, Reggie."

She could scarcely still the beating of her heart to reply.

"What shall I sing, Mr. Eltham?"

"*Mr. Elthem!* don't call me *Mr.*, Reggie," and he looked as though about to fold her in his arms.

"I should call you Mr.—"

He put a finger on her lips.

"What shall I call you?"

"By what name do you think of me?"

She felt her face grow hot, but it was too dark for him to see plainly.

By what name did she think of him? by what name did she not that conveyed the meaning of love.

"What," he asked again, "Bertrand?"

"Sometimes."

"Eltham?"

"Often."

"Anything else?" very softly.

"I'd rather not tell you now, just yet."

"Yes, tell me, darling."

Her hand gave an involuntary movement between a tremor and a pressure.

"Did you ever think *that* of me, sweetheart?"

She was silent.

"Did you, dearest?"

She drew a long sigh.

"Answer me," he urged rising on one knee.

Regina looked in his eyes.

"Tell me quickly, now or—"

He was so near she felt his breath like an aroma of perfume float across her cheek.

"I think of you very often, by the title of a book."

"Oh," a little disappointed.

"My Love—" she began, he stopped the words with a quick impassioned kiss.

"My Love and Noble—"

He put both arms around her, drew her close, close.

"'My Love and Noble,' what?" he repeated, his eyes looking into her soul, his lips just escaping hers to let her breathe the words.

"My Love and Noble Lord."

"Ah!"

The sound of the warring elements, the surging rushing torrents, were unheard.

Closely hemmed in, sentinelled by lofty pines which seemed to view with groans of anguish the downfall of their weaker brothers, crashing limbs and broken boughs. That the storm itself did not cease, was unheeded and forgotten. He was at her feet, his head lying on her lap, the firelight playing on their faces, both her hands held clasped under his chin, he unloosing them every second kissing them over and over again, those dear hands, sweet hands, *his* hands.

Then as if resting his head more comfortably, he closed his eyes saying:

"This is heaven; sing my angel."

And in a low voice she sang to him, every charming melody, pathetic ballad and song of love she could recall.

Men are big babies, she thought, disengaging one hand to run it through his hair, now she turns a wave the other way leaving his forehead bare, how white and smooth the little spot, she kissed it, then laid her cheek on his brow, all the time singing

Was he asleep? she listened pausing in a line which ran, "Fond hearts break when love,"—he opened his eyes lazily, "Go on, dearest, what breaks fond hearts."

"I think they break," she said, "when love loses this, and this and this."

"Ours must not break," he said holding her so hard she couldn't lift her head, "nor shall it ever lose this and this and this."

How exquisite is the happiness we call the folly of love.



“ Our love shall not die; nor shall it ever lose this, and this, and this.”

Now she is singing again, he talking and their voices seem to blend in musical rhythm. He was saying with half closed eyes:

“There is in music an attractive language without words, which unconsciously creates sympathy and exerts a powerful influence over the imagination, the impassioned swelling and retarding notes of the voice seem to breathe a soul in sublime unison, the music and musician become as one, and this music and musician are one, and all mine.” As he concluded these words there was a long blissful silence unbroken by either.

CHAPTER XIX.

Presently Regina said, "How much is lost to nations who never kiss."

"Foolish nations," he replied.

"What is 'kiss'?"

"Anglo-Saxon," he answered, "and doesn't it instance how pleasant Anglo-Saxon can be?"

"What is its derivation?"

"It is said to be allied to the Gothic 'kustus,' a proof or test to the Latin 'gustus,' a taste; one writer I recall said; a kiss is 'a gust, a taste, a something choice.' Rowena, the beautiful daughter of Saxon Hengist, is given the credit of introducing kissing into England, yet, were the natives so wanting, it seems as if the Romans must have anticipated her. The Romans had a pleasant word for kiss," he went on, "osculum, from os, the mouth, and meant a little mouth, a sweet mouth. 'Give me a sweet little mouth,' would be the phrase used by a little Roman boy when asking his mamma for a kiss. Our English word appears much the same in German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish and Anglo-Saxon. It is worth remembering for, natural as kissing may seem to be, it is a practice quite unknown to the Australians, Maoris of New Zealand, the Papuans of New Guinea, the negroes of Southern and Central Africa, the

Laplanders, Esquimaux and other wild nations. They have, however, most of them reached a stage beyond that of rubbing their noses together."

"But we have not," she said with a laugh in which he joined, for their noses were at that moment in very close proximity.

"The Aryan people believe kissing to be a veritable union of spirits," he said.

"I once heard a lecturer say, that among some nations or tribes in Africa, if they felt a very deep or moving attachment they would spit upon each other," she said.

"That's nice," he answered, and they both laugh immoderately at his droll sarcasm.

It was growing late.

"It must soon clear," she said looking at the dark sky and pouring rain "What is the time now?"

"Nearly six o'clock," he answered.

"Oh, I wish it would stop. Had we not better go at any rate. It will be soon too dark to find our way."

"We will go if it does not cease shortly. I saw," he went on reverting to the old subject again, "that during a late election somewhere abroad a woman offered a kiss to all who would cast a vote for her husband."

"What do you think of it?" she asked.

"I think," he said, "any woman whose vanity or greed for position is so inordinate, is too promiscuous in caresses, to be very partial at any time."

"Would you be willing your wife should be kissed for a vote or a hundred—"

"Not for a thousand! or an unanimous election to any office, even though it be the chief one within the power of the state or country to give. My wife must not be kissed, or ever have been kissed by another. I do not speak from a motive of sentiment, but safety. A woman who permits the freedom of a man's embrace before they are engaged lovers, but stimulates pride of conquest, and satisfies no function but vanity. And one too fond of admiration will sooner or later cast a shadow upon her husband's name."

"The woman you marry must never have been kissed?" she asked in a still voice.

"No."

"And you, no doubt, you have been attracted at some time, kissed one or two, may be three, or—what then?"

"True, I may have done so, but it is a different matter, entirely so with a man."

"I do not agree with you. I will not allow that it is so different a matter, any more or less pardonable in you than in the woman you marry. If it is wrong for one, it is equally so for the other, and it is this very 'another matter,' or 'a man's a man' theory, that to-day encroaches upon all society, and blackens the whole surface and interior of civilization with injustice and disgrace. If it is not right for me to kiss a man, to be kissed, why then have you kissed me and doubtless or possibly hundreds of others? Why do you tempt me to an indulgence you condemn as an evil? I am not your promised wife!"

"Reggie!"

"I am not!"

That was true. So thoroughly did she seem to be his, so wholly had they appeared to belong to each other, the omission of that usual formality escaped him till now.

"You have kissed me many times," she continued. "I once heard a man say, every man will try to kiss a pretty girl, and when a man marries one he may, safely believe that she has been kissed before. Why do women deceive? because the laws and privileges governing the sexes are so unequal and restrictive. A woman who loves a man should kiss him if she wishes to, for no honorable woman encourages for a moment a love she has not a right to give, or for a man who has not a right to return it. You would not dare tell me that I was the first woman you ever kissed, would you? would you dare to tell me such a falsehood? No, for you know that I would not believe it!" she cried, with a slight tone of asperity in her voice, rising excitedly and then seating herself in the same manner.

There was something in her breast that gave infinite pain, was it jealousy?

"Yet you would expect, nay demand of the woman—"

"Don't speak so, Reggie dear, tell me—"

"*What!* if I was ever kissed?" she answered in a cold disdainful voice.

She anticipated wrongly.

He was about to say: "Tell me that you will be

my wife," for ever since she had said: "I am not your promised wife," he had thought of nothing else, scarcely heard her words.

"What if I had been," she went on, "how would you know if I chose to lie, would you believe me?"

"I should always believe the woman I love."

"I believe a man who loves a woman should not ask such a question, or think of it at all when she is his, that should be enough," she said. "Would you love her less if she had?"

"I will not say that, I should fear to make her my wife," he answered.

"I think a man who honors a woman with his love, should trust that her pride, and self-respect would always guide her to judicious and womanly conduct, but should she have been guilty of bestowing a kiss of affection, of even an indiscretion, or error, what is that to the man who knew nothing of her, she nothing of him, at the time of its occurrence. They meet years after and love perhaps with true devotion. Why must a woman confess every act of her life, the world so frowns upon to the man who asks her hand in marriage?"

"It is all well enough to say, 'Don't do wrong,' 'Don't fall into sin,' but girls constantly do, then what is their duty? to tell the world, or one, the one who seeks her hand, or no one?"

"The last is right, no one."

"How many girls, girls of respectable family, cultured rearing, and religious teaching, have in the first dawn of womanhood slipped and fallen, yet the

circumstances were such the world has remained in ignorance of it, unusual thing, her sex did not betray her passion. Is it her duty to tell to the man she loves, perhaps with a depth of devotion, that her own life would not be too great a sacrifice did circumstance seem to make that sacrifice imperative or a duty. Loving this man with her whole soul or may be not loving him, but contemplating a union for a home or a dozen other reasons for which marriages are made in our time, why must she say, 'Before I accept you, I feel it a duty to make a disclosure, then perhaps you will not accept me.' One can fancy the blush of shame and grief too, no doubt, with which a sensitive, proud woman would make such an acknowledgment."

Her tears, scarcely restrained, her faint voice and hesitation, attest her suffering. This is the story of many.

"When I was sixteen my brother returned from college on a vacation, with him a friend, Hal Winters.

"My brother was grave and talented, but Hal—Ah well, he was not my brother! He was handsome and *débonnaire*, and often told me I was beautiful, sometimes that I was an angel, and those words were ever pleasant to hear from his lips. His manner was gentle, deferential, so unlike the lads about. He would succeed in life, he had learned to perfection the art of flattery. Every spare moment we spent, rambling through the wooded valleys and pine shaded hills, he telling me thrilling tales of love and romance, of daring youths who perished for their love, of griev-

ing maidens, dying for the same. Interesting stories told with the delivery of a scholar and the warmth of a lover.

“Sitting for hours in the languorous stillness of the aromatic pines, but those days could not go on forever.

“Six weeks had flown, he must return to college. She is awakened to their transgression, her heart aches with the pain of knowledge, may be, not yet, with a sense of disgrace. Her secret is safe. He will not, perhaps, boast of conquest, if he should, men have been known to lie, and then again, she has a brother.

“After years, years of truth and purity, she meets a man she *does* love, then is a suffering only woman’s heart can know. But that anguish is not enough, that one misguided step, debars her from his sacred love. Now she must lay her secret bare to the one being whose love and respect she craves, and to be happy with, requires.

“Do you say she should cast herself before him in this humiliation, would he love, respect her still, gather her to his heart and say with a fond kiss of manhood, ‘I love and esteem you just the same. We will live it down together and hand in hand forget the past and any fault that may have been within the life of either?’

“Oh no, he will not say that, he could not marry *her*, *she* the mother of *his* children? Impossible.

“Could she have been one of the goldfish at his friend’s rooms a few months before however (assuming that goldfish possess the power of hearing,) she

would doubtless have been much surprised that so virtuous a creature had a history, she might have heard this narrative, 'Yes, I'll settle down, I guess; there's nothing in it. I've run the scale, the gauntlet. I started pretty young. When I was only eighteen I got into a scrape with one of our girls, the boss gave her a hundred dollars and saw her through all right. But just as I was leaving college I came near being floored by Nina Livingstone, she was decidedly pretty, by Jove, she was that. The most serious time I ever had, though, was with that little vixen, Hetty, she was a sharp one. I kept her three years, but I never loved any of them, as I did Loie. She nearly swamped me, too, with her extravagance. Yes, I guess I'll get some nice little girl and get married.'

"He never thinks he is sinning, does he ever think of his *child*? Yes, his child by a servant girl, being reared at the cost of the state. Bah! you men with fine notions of honor. Women are made of too soft a stuff to battle in life with men and all the odds against them. The law attempts to enforce chastity in one sex only, thereby defeating its own aim. "Who is the guilty one in this case, I ask you that, Mr. Eltham, who?"

Eltham did not speak, or attempt to, he stared at her as one dazed.

She felt she was saying more than she really meant, but a tantalizing spirit of irrational femininity spurred her on. She felt a bitter pleasure somehow in defying the mockery of our customs to him, at this moment.

"The scarlet letter! to think that women were ever compelled to wear this symbol of significant disgrace and social ostracism. A man will rarely overlook, but if he appears to, and they marry, she has placed herself at the opening of their domestic life, in a position to easily awaken distrust and jealousy. He would be apt to forget that she needn't have told him, and only remember that she had.

"Goethe said, 'who would call that credulous fair a wanton, who, deluded by false promises, has yielded to the temptations of an artful seducer.' I think some husbands would, and in sarcastic inference or pointed accusation, ignore the fact that a woman proved her worth, her love, and purity of conscience, by relating so bitter a truth.

"No, women should keep their own counsel as men do theirs. There is more honor and happiness to be gained in refusal without explanation, than in outspoken candor for approbation or indulgence."

"Great God!" Eltham groaned aloud, and following that groan was one of the most terrific peals of thunder that ever fell on human ears. A wild startled neigh from one of the horses and the next instant Restive, his broken bridle-rein dangling, crashed through the dripping underbrush into the forest out of sight.

CHAPTER XX.

Eltham tried to think, but his mind was swerving in a thousand whirling eddies of despair.

A maddening thought seized him to get away.

He sprang to the door in an attempt to arrest the frightened animal, but was too late. Regina also sprang to her feet, he was rushing into the storm in his shirt sleeves, she called him once, then again, he turned back, and slipping his coat from her shoulders she held it towards him. Her long white arms gleamed in the deadening fire-light like polished marble. He snatched the coat from her hand and hurried out.

Reaching the tree where his horse had been tied, he paused.

There, beneath the great spreading oak of a few hours before, but now split and rent by the lightning's blast, lay his magnificent stallion Nilah—dead.

Stooping in the rain he gently stroked the soft wet neck as he said: "I would to God the shaft had reached me, too!" Had he at that moment been at the top of the cliff instead of the bottom, his wish to die would have been verified.

At that moment he would have killed himself. He could not have conveyed through the medium of language the torture that wrung his soul.

He put his hand to his head, his hat was gone, he had not felt its loss. He stood entirely unprotected from the torrent, but regardless of all sank on the fallen trunk by the side of his dead horse, and buried his face in his hands.

Meantime, what was Regina doing.

She never could control, when started, her high strung and often exaggerated feelings for her own sex.

If she had spoken truly, it was unwise and certainly unnecessary, he was not the world, to air her doctrines to him would redress no wrong. She could not recall what she had said now. She remembered saying that a woman should keep her own counsel, yes she said that, and also words, many too, that could encourage misconstruction. Now she reflected deeply, what must he think? She knew what he must think, and she felt as if she should stifle in her misery.

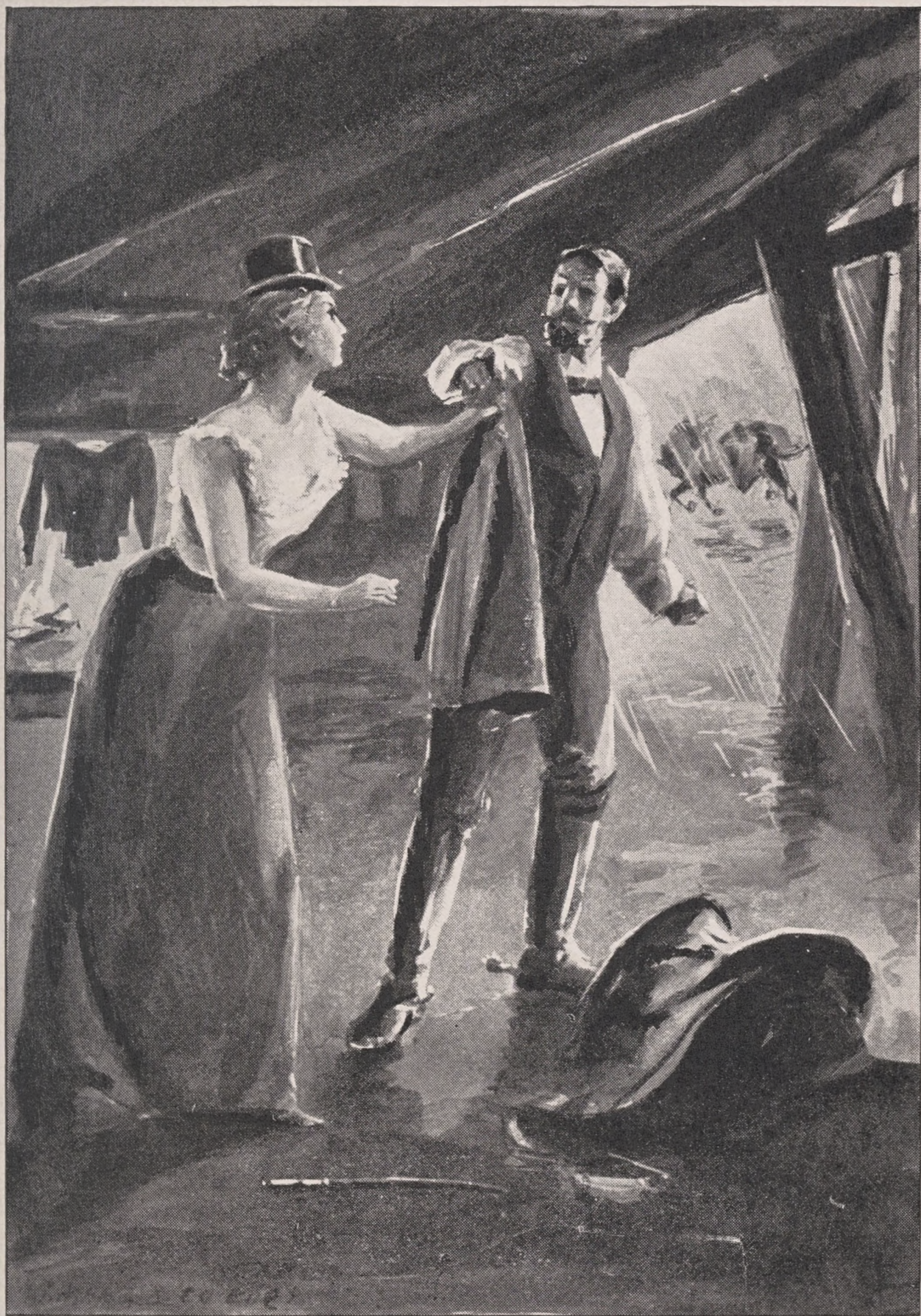
Could he suspect her truth.

Might he fancy she used as an example an actual case and that case—

She cried aloud, at the agonizing thoughts crowding her brain.

"I will call him!" she ran to the door, but pride caused her to halt, no, she would not call him.

Reaching up, she took down the waist of her habit, buttoning it with a troubled brow. Then she sat down again. They were separated, she must live her life without him, all her future alone. How the pains of life jostle its pleasures and the maze of dissatisfaction rests upon it all.



“What must he think of me?”

"No, I cannot endure it!" then her heart hardened in a stubborn resolve to let events take their course. She would neither call him nor offer any explanation.

That he could doubt *her* a complex feeling of anger and shame suffused her face with hot, rebellious blood. Whatever suppositions he might be capable of, let him suffer for them, and she would suffer too, but would not speak. She had no thought of tears, her heart seemed deadened by its grief.

There was a crunching of the twigs outside and Eltham entered drenched to the skin. Shaking his coat out he kicked a smoking log until it burst into a blaze. His face was calm.

Regina thought how his nobility of form exalted the beauty within, how tender he had always been in his manner to her. There seemed all of a sudden a wonderful awakening in her heart of the power of his great attraction, no passion for the man, but an overwhelming affection, as one might feel for a child seized upon her.

He felt that her eyes were fixed upon him, his heart was loyal to itself, he knew he was beloved and that dispelled all doubt or fear. He despised himself now that he could have for a second felt a suspicion of her.

"I must have lost my senses to think ill of her," he thought.

Had she ever committed a wrong, he knew he could have forgiven it. He would have made her his wife at any hazard content with her present love, and let the past, whatever it might or could be, rest in its grave forever.

"Reggie!"

She did not answer.

He turned his head to look at her and held out his arms.

"Come to me, dear, come."

"I cannot," she said.

He walked over to her side and lifted her to his heart. "Forgive me, darling." He kissed her, and her eyes filled with tears. Happy tears that he still loved her and so generously took the initiative to reconciliation with no ado. He drew her down by his side and passed his arm around her waist as her head sank upon his shoulder with a faint sigh of satisfied ownership.

He was hers, all hers, that was enough.

"I have serious news," he then said.

She laughed, her laugh with its ring of truth. No, there was no secret in that pure soul, she was gold and unalloyed.

"Don't tell me, I am too happy," she answered.

"I must tell you. Restive has broken loose and Nilah is dead."

"Poor Nilah," and she passed her hand up around his neck, "how dearly you loved him. Oh, I am so sorry."

"I did love him," he said, and there was almost a tremor in his voice; "but there is something much more serious, my child, do you not realize our dreadful predicament?"

"Our predicament," she said slowly, and then like a spark of lightning, the truth flashed upon her mind.

"You mean that we"—she paused, a dreadful fear coming over her. "You mean that we must spend the night here!" springing up in alarm.

An awful look overspread her face, followed by a marble paleness. She swayed as if about to fall; he held out his arm to save her, but she recovered herself, stood erect, calm and motionless as a statue, then, like the flitting of a shadow darted across the room, through the door, into the darkness.

The rain had ceased.

On with the fleetness of a deer she flew, Eltham in mad pursuit. Suddenly catching her foot in a trailing vine, she fell, striking her head on a stump and rolled onto the soggy earth, unconscious.

There she lay, taking her in his arms, he bore her through the darkness to the cabin. She felt a strange easy movement and now and then something touched her cheek, and hair and brow, not kisses, but the soft pressure of warm love lips, she stirred a little and looked up, was it night or day, for the moment she could not realize, the fire was so bright.

Then she heard his voice, which fully roused her, saying:

"Foolish girl, you might have been lost and died from the exposure, had I not been close upon your heels, how could I have found you in the darkness, lying there unconscious as you were?"

"I regret more than words can tell this dilemma, but there is no remedy for it. We must stay until help comes, or daylight directs us.

"Can't you bring a little of that philosophy into

this situation. Let us try and wait it out as best we can."

"Oh, we cannot stay here!" she cried.

"But we must, now don't struggle to get away. I shall not trust you again."

"What shall we do, let us try to find our way out!" she said in despair.

"No, we shall stay right here. We never could find our way."

Holding her hand, he took his handkerchief and wiped the mud away from the bruised palm on which she had fallen.

Then he straightened out the fingers, one by one, toying with them more meditatively than carelessly, and suddenly asked without looking up:

"When shall we be married?"

"You have not yet asked me to marry you."

"Say when," he returned taking no notice of her remark.

"Not until I have been asked."

"To-morrow?"

"Ask me," smiling a little.

"Shall it be to-morrow?"

"You wretch!"

"It *is* to-morrow," he cried as they both laughed and sealed the strange proposal and unspoken acceptance.

"What can compare to happy love?" he said. "Ambition? No, with it no power or glory can compete. The father who lays in the green turf his loved and lost, the mother who has learned a tender

memory to revere, the husband who weeps in silence and despair, the wife who kneels in submissive faith and trust give back the lie and all declare ambition to be vile. I have you now, you are my promised wife, tell me, whatever your reply may be, remember before all I adore you, have you ever loved another?"

"No," she said frankly, "I never have; never loved, never kissed a man in my life but my own father until—well, do you believe me?"

"With my whole heart," he responded.

"I mustn't ask any questions, I suppose," she said.

"You may, but don't. Be happy in the knowledge you have my absolute and fondest love."

"I will."

A long pause ensued, during which he drew her down on his knee, loosed the braids and let her long hair fall over her shoulders in a flood of raven meshes.

He was mentally reading her characteristics. These fine silken strands of shining hair denoted her exquisite taste and intelligence, no pouting lip indicated the presence of timidity, but slightly parted were a proof of her open, generous nature, disclosing the regular teeth a usual guaranty of culture and refinement. All these he read with much interest and pleasure. Then he pressed his finger tips on her head locating the different faculties with the usual spirit of investigation, found in the lover and believer of any art or science.

Love of home, was very large, reverence somewhat lacking, combativeness medium, language full, music

largely developed, all the higher qualities including benevolence and friendship, proved to him that nature had vied with herself in a munificent bestowal of her best gifts to this beautiful girl.

What a luxury is the silence, broken only by the language of affection, a repetition of which to another dispels its sweet pervading charm.

"Now," she said, "we understand each other fully, if you would modify some of my ideas, I am open to conviction in all things. I think, however, we live in totally different worlds as man and woman, both false and at variance with nature. If we are to understand ourselves and truthfully measure life and what the sexes are rightfully and properly to each other, we should be brought up together, just as companions under similar conditions, in a noble, natural manner to effectively open the prejudice blinded eyes of all. Let us like yourselves select our own callings, associates and recreations, let us receive our own rewards. To live as we desire unhampered by the illiberal forms which, to the logical mind, is basest servitude, let us be women fearless and independent, in short let us be free. With right conditions aiding we would all cease to be that animal subject to the law of the survival of the fittest, and become rational, noble men and women who lived for a useful end, and looked upon the supremacy of human life humanly lived as the highest and only goal of actual success."

"When I was a lad," said Eltham irrelevantly changing the subject, "I remember reading a pathetic



Love, benevolence, friendship—Nature had vied with herself in a generous bestowal of her best gifts to this beautiful girl.

story of a maid who lost her life here among these mountains; have you ever read the story of Jennie M'Crea?"

"Yes, wasn't she the girl who was made captive and murdered by the Indians just before our century? We may be near the place; they say the spirits of those who meet a violent death, haunt the spots by some law of attraction."

"You are not afraid of ghosts, are you? This must be near the camping ground of Irving's I fancy," he laughed, looking into her face.

"Ah," she said fondly, "we need fear the shadow of nothing since we have the reality of each other. How blessed we are, there is so often an obstacle to love like ours, excessive youth on the part of one or both. A fond mother cannot lose her son, the chosen one does not meet approval or her parents object, then and most frequently of all, poverty intervenes, raising its ghastly negative head to destine love to early death or separation. With us there is no barrier, my wish is my father's will and you—"

"I am free to choose for myself and know that such a happy choice as mine, could never meet with opposition."

Her eyes looked up at him, a love too deep for words. After some moments she said:

"If I should die first—"

"Don't let us speak of death."

"Yes, I wish to, we must die, and one of us first, you know."

"I don't like the subject."

"Nor I, but promise me something now and I will never speak of it again."

"I will promise anything you may ask me, dear. What is it? that I will never marry again?"

"Oh, no, no indeed, do you think I could be capable of wanting one whom I love to be unhappy forever? That subject never entered my mind but since you have spoken I say now, could you find another you loved, marry by all means, but select with a quickened judgment should I leave you little children."

"My sweet one, I never should choose another; I never should marry again."

She pressed his hand to her lips. All women enjoy the assurance that they are the only one *he* could love.

"No, what I want you to promise me is that I shall never be buried, take no one's word that I am dead, not that of the most skilled physician, let there be unmistakable evidence, then I would be cremated."

Eltham moved a little.

"I don't think I could, Reggie, no I am sure I could not permit it."

"You must permit it indeed, dearest; I think it should be the law. 'Dust to dust, ashes to ashes.' I prefer to be ashes, better a thousand times, than in the pestilential earth amid the rotting bodies of generations, and it wholly precludes the possibility of that horror too little thought of and when such rumors or written accounts reach people's ears, considered more sensational than true. I speak of the

awful fact of premature burial. I have made a study of the subject statistically, I *know* these cases are true. Listen, Eltham. In February, 1876, the body of Mrs. Harriet Westerfell of Bloomingdale, N. J. was prepared for burial. When the undertaker was about screwing down the coffin lid, she started up, saying in a loud voice: 'My God! what are you going to do with me?' She expired at once, it is thought, from shock. Dr. MacWithey asserted as his opinion that it was. Had she been buried with that haste that usually attends funerals, she would have come to life in the grave. In Holderness, N. H. some years ago, a Mr. Drew bet that he could drink a pint of rum at a draught. He did and apparently died the next day. He was buried. Some friends came the following day and had his body taken up, he had revived in the grave, all the dreadful evidences of an agonizing death being apparent. On Nov. 11th., 1882 Mrs. W. L. Pettit, wife of the Teller of the First National Bank of Fort Wayne, Indiana, apparently died. The following night the watchers heard a faint sigh, and looking at the supposed corpse, they found her eyes open, she spoke, asking for her husband who lifted her in his arms from the coffin in which a short time she would, six feet under ground, have perished. Is that not enough to convince you, they are too common to take any risk whatever.

. "Some years ago in the Assembly of France, a debate occurred on the report of the committee appointed on the petition of Dr. Carnol, for an

amendment to the civil code in the matter of ante-burial ceremonies. The French law allows but twenty-four hours between death and burial. Dr. Carnol declared it to be insufficient, supporting his assertions by numerous instances, showing many persons were buried alive annually in France.

“His Eminence, the Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux, arose on this occasion and asserted that he had saved several lives, while a parish priest, which were about to be sacrificed by the indecent haste of friends. He said that he had seen a man taken from his coffin and restored to perfect health, another of advanced years all ready for burial revived and lived for twelve hours after. And more, he himself had performed a miracle equal to any recorded in the Scriptures and, was enough, had it taken place in earlier times when people believed in miracles, to have caused him to be canonized as a saint. He saw the body of a young girl laid out for burial, her face was so natural he could not believe her dead, thereupon he called out that he had come to save her and entreated her to make an effort to shake off the lethargy which oppressed her, his voice penetrated and revived her numbed senses and she awoke, came back to life and lived for years. The French law was not repealed or altered, but remains a blot upon the intelligence of the people to this day.

“In 1869, the month of May, a young lady in New Orleans returning from mass supposedly died of heart disease. The physician (her own uncle) said she was **dead**. In New Orleans the graves are shelves

in raised mounds. On these shelves, the caskets are placed, and thrust in head first their entire length. The door consisting of a slab is then closed and locked as though it were a single tomb. At dusk that evening (for inhuman as it seems, she was buried the day of her apparent death) the sexton's son on his rounds before locking the cemetery, passed the path on which her tomb was situated, hearing moans he lost his self-possession, in fright he ran to the gate of the cemetery, locked it, hurried home to his room, which he did not leave till the next day. Then he got courage to tell his father, who notified the parents and proceeding to the tomb, the most shocking spectacle was seen. She had come to life and in her suffering at finding herself buried alive, had struggled fearfully. Her face and body terribly distorted, the hair torn from her head and lying on her breast the lining of the casket and her shroud torn into rags, the flesh gnawed and bitten from her fingers. Of course the horror and remorse of the parents cannot be described, but what must have been the feeling of the addle-pated coward who might have saved her this heart rending experience. I think those who wake in the grave may not suffer so consciously as we think, they must with the dawning of such a knowledge lose their reason at once. In Munich every one, high or low, is treated with equal injustice unless the law has been changed since I was there in '81. They are taken almost immediately to the cemetery where there is a chamber of death. Windows look in upon the couches and almost every hour anxious faces peer in

at the bodies awaiting burial. Wires are attached to the hands and feet so that in case of awakening a bell will summon the watchman to bear the body away to friends. The custom of hasty burial prevails too largely in every country, even in our own, our ancestors seem to have adopted the rule for a century, the sooner the dead are out of the house, the sooner will they become reconciled. Rev. William Tennent, of Freehold, Monmouth County, N. J. when a young man devoted himself to the ministry. He went to New Brunswick and applied himself so closely to his studies that his health became injured. He lost flesh rapidly and became reduced almost to a skeleton. He grew constantly worse until little hope of his life was entertained. One morning while talking with his brother of a future life, he sank back and became unconscious, appeared to die. He was laid out after a time and the friends were summoned to his funeral. In the evening his physician and friend to whom he was greatly attached, and who cherished the warmest friendship towards him, returned, he was much affected by the news of his death. He could scarcely credit his senses and would not believe it was true. He examined the body closely and thought there were signs of life. He began to work with it insisting that the people should be notified not to come to the funeral. The brother objected; certainly he was dead, but the doctor prevailed finally, and continued his exertions. The third day arrived, and no hope was entertained by anybody but the doctor, who staid by the body day and night. The people were again

invited, and this time assembled to the funeral. The doctor would not give up and matters reached the point when he begged for delay, first a few hours, then a half hour and, finally for fifteen minutes. The brother came in, the doctor was just wetting the tongue of the corpse. 'Now this delay and working over the body of my brother is shameful, useless, and must stop at once. I insist that the funeral shall go on!' he exclaimed, and at this critical moment dramatic as it seems the man opened his eyes. Of course his relatives and friends were amazed and delighted then, but they had ridiculed and insulted the devotion of this physician, the only one who cared enough to try and resuscitate him. He lived for many years and, whatever his malady, upon his recovery he was totally ignorant of every transaction of his life preceding his wonderful experience; could neither read nor write. One day, however, while looking at some Latin, with which he had formerly been very familiar, it gradually came to him that he had seen something of the kind before, and after a time, something over a year from his supposed death, all recollection and knowledge of the past was restored. Bruhier, in his dissertation upon the great uncertainty of the signs of death, and the abuse of precipitate interments has collected one hundred and eighty cases in which persons were treated as dead, when life was not extinct. Fifty-two were actually buried alive. Four were cut open before it was discovered that life was present. Fifty-three revived after being placed in their coffins, without any effort

being made to revive them, and seventy-one are supposed to have died when they really had not. These are facts. These and many more are known. But the unknown, and these form but a small part of the great total of whom accident has not revealed their woful end. How many distorted skeletons are now passing to dust depicting in their attitude an end whose horror words fail to paint. A remarkable truth in many cases is that trance or a condition of suspended animation is preceded by an illness that makes the supposed death appear doubly sure. No burials should ever be made without a severing of the arteries that would make a return to consciousness impossible. I cannot express to you my feelings on the subject, it has been an ever present fear of my whole life."

"If I am here there shall be no doubt, be sure of that, but how could I see this form consigned to ashes," he said.

"But only the form, the body, dear, not the soul, the ego, the self, that which animates it, *I*."

"I cannot promise yet," and lifting her head, he drew her to his breast and folded his arms about her adding: "Try to rest now, how still and grand it is here in these old hills. Kiss me."

CHAPTER XXI.

"I wonder where that leads to," she said, and rising after a few moments walked to a little door in the corner.

Unlatched and swung it wide with a tripple rusty creak of its unused hinges, then paused as a cold damp air that might come from a dark underground passage rushed across her face.

The hesitation was but momentary, then she stepped over a narrow space stopping as she did so to unfasten her skirt, which had caught on a nail or sharp projection or splinter in the door.

Then she descended several stairs closely followed by Eltham. At the foot they walked along a narrow subterranean hall, vaulted with numerous arches which opened into other passages and chambers, seeming to extend into others again until the maze was lost to the eyes in darkness.

Here and there were flaming lights which rather than dispelling seemed to add to the gloom.

They heard voices discoursing in low tones then a trembling moan as of some one in physical pain.

Far off in the distant gloomy chamber were groups of shadowy figures and from behind the pillars and rudely jutting edges of the rock, strange and unfamiliar faces peeped, then disappeared.

"Oh, let us turn back, I am afraid!" she said.

"No, let us see what's here," he answered.

"I am cold," she returned, and walking along, suddenly stepped on some soft smooth thing; reaching down she felt a furry surface, and picking it up, he wound the warm mantle about her the folds falling far below her feet. Now turning to the left they entered a place brilliant with light, but entirely deserted. On a large table in the centre was a huge box containing uncovered, a collection of pearls, diamonds, sapphires, rubies and emeralds which sparkled and glinted in thousands before their astonished gaze. They raised them in handfuls, the gems passing through their fingers like crystal drops of petrified vapor glistening in the mingling of the various hues, as might solidified and lambent sunshine. Millions glided like rippling water over their palms, and they smiled and swished their hands through them as one might toy with a cask of dried grain.

Strange as it seems, neither expressed or experienced a wish to possess them.

To whom could they belong? Who had relegated such spoils to the depths and safety of these old mountains? Vague notions of pirates and robbers flitted for a moment in their minds.

Weary of so childish a pleasure as a fancy for baubles, no matter how costly and beautiful, they passed along.

One necklace of diamonds and emeralds Regina had a fancy to try on, taking them in her hand she turned to him.

"You fasten it."

Looking at them with a smile of admiration. They were no more beautiful than her own, but they were something new.

"Dost like it?" she asked softly.

"Yes, but thy neck needs no jewels to enhance it."

"My face seems changed," she said looking in the glass.

She felt his arms steal fondly around her from behind and turning to whisper some smiling chide of encouraging love in his ear, he was gone. The passage down which they had come was closed, closed as thoroughly as though it had never been there, not closed indeed, but had completely disappeared, where it had been was a wall of solid rock; not a rough wall marked and shelved with the seamy signs and ropy hollows of drill and blast, but a smooth polished splendid surface of blue veined marble that might have filled the interior of a palace.

Looking ahead she saw mirrored at her back a lovely woman, a dream in misty white and gold. The woman smiled, saying, "Come! come!"

Regina faintly smiled in return, with a feeling of uneasiness whose dominant feature was the knowledge that she was alone with a stranger, and above all that Eltham had gone from her side without a word.

"Bertrand! where are you?"

"——where are you," sounded in echoing mockery from the vaulted chambers and roof of this horrible, beautiful place.

"Where is this, who are you?" she cried again, trying to keep down her rising apprehension.

The woman answered only with another smile, repeating, "Come! come!"

"Show me the way out. Oh, help me please!"

"Where do you wish to go?"

Where indeed, she could not remember.

"Surely you must know. Can you not see that I am lost, lost!"

"Come then, come with me," said the weird smiling creature, and moved silently away.

The girl followed, but no longer walked, she dashed wildly as if pursued, with a rapidity and terror that confused all her faculties.

This accursed necklace must have some terrible charm of witchery or what possessed her?

She cried again and again as she flew along:

"Eltham! I am lost, where are you, do not leave me alone, oh God!"

Then there was that dull dreary sound as of the ocean beating against the rocks above her. And ever as she called, the smiling woman laughed, saying: "He is not here, he would not know your voice even if he heard it."

"What do you mean?" cried the girl stumbling on the folds of the long garment, and moving dizzily aside from a singularly draped box in her pathway, while stifling a dreadful sob.

"He will never see you again, but you may see him once more."

Then she felt herself floating through the air as one does in dreams, sinking to a half stupor she could yet distinguish every thing around.

Borne away soaring into a forest which rang with music that seemed to her awed ears and senses like a glorious anthem of a million human voices. It all ceased. A stillness as of death prevailed. All at once a body of gay huntsmen galloped by, breaking the silence with the inspiring music of the horn, sounding high above the tread of prancing feet.

They all bounded forward exulting in their happiness. Foremost in the group was Eltham, he had evidently forgotten her, but she held out her arms, with a glad cry of joy.

"Here I am, look, dearest, save me!"

He paid no attention, glancing up at her as any one's eyes might fall on one within the casual range of vision, no recognition in his face, no anxiety in his manner.

She was forgotten.

He seemed to revel in life with no thought or memory of the past or her, full of health and gayety in the happy certainty of some tangible bliss, a bliss she was not of.

Could he but see her, she knew he would turn back, could he hear her voice, he would come to her. Oh, the suffering under that thrall and harrowing delirium of impotence and fear she could not cast from her.

He darted through the field and out of sight then back again, delighting all the time in some great happiness. She heard him call the huntsmen around him, how dearly familiar was that voice, why could he not hear hers too?

"I shall go mad! Bertrand! Bertrand! do you not know me? Regina. I am here alone, Oh save me, come to me!" the frantic girl cried.

Then she heard him laugh, that hearty merry laugh of his, and shout: "Make ready for the chase, boys!"

He had not heard, at least he had not heeded. Sitting his steed with the grace of a young warrior, his buoyant laugh floating back to her ears, he rode away from view.

He was unchanged in appearance but she was another being, he would never know nor love her again.

She turned to the beaming creature who had enticed her here, and putting her hands to her throat, tried to break the chain of diamonds. This abominable necklace had bewitched them all. Yet try with all her strength she could not break or tear it off. A stifling oppressive heat and suffocation took hold of her, she felt two hands close with an almost vice like grasp around her throat, two dreadful eyes came close to her face, eyes no longer smiling and beautiful but baleful and malignant.

"He is mine," said this siren, "and you have lost him forever!" They were both hurled into space, by gigantic invisible hands. They kept falling, down—down—were they to fall forever? she made a mighty wrench from the thing which held her. Her unsupportable terror found vent in a loud scream of anguish as she struggled with insane fury to get free.

"Help! help!"

"My Reggie, what is it?"

His voice, his dear voice, it was pitch darkness, but his arms were holding her.

"You are here, you are with me, you are mine?" she said wildly, and as he tried to soothe her. "I have had such a frightful, terrible dream, you seemed lost to me forever. Oh, oh!" and she burst into hysterical tears.

"Hush, hush, foolish sweetheart, would that be the saddest calamity life could hold for you?"

"Yes, yes, it would, I could not live should anything come to part us now," and she clung to him trembling like a leaf.

"My darling, nothing can part us, you are mine now," he returned. He could not draw her closer.

"Not yet, Bertrand, not yet."

"But so near, to-morrow."

"Ah, yes, to-morrow, but to-morrow is so far away!"

"You wish with me 'twere here?"

She put both arms around his neck in silence.

"My little wife!"

* * * * *

The faint gray rays of early dawn were breaking when the weary prisoners heard the baying of a dog.

"That's Trace!" she exclaimed, "he will find us," and a few moments later a great liver colored blood hound leaped through the door.

Then came the sound of voices hellowing as they came. Eltham answered and in five minutes more, Regina was clasped in her father's arms.

After explanations they started for the carriage,

left with an attendant at the edge of the wood. Weak from loss of food and weary from the excitement and exposure of the storm, the girl walked between her father and lover at times almost borne along by the latter.

"How in the world did you ever get into this place?" asked the general with a set, angry look on his face.

"I acted with a short sightedness that deserves your severest censure, general, and regret more than I can express the unfortunate result."

That their accidental adventure would be the subject of gossip and unkind rumors, they all knew the tendency of the human mind too well to doubt.

Explanations would be unpleasant as well as useless exciting ridicule if not unbelief.

After placing Regina in the carriage well wrapped in warm rugs, the general closed the door and beckoned to Eltham.

Lying back she closed her eyes exhausted.

"Well, Mr. Eltham, what do you propose?" said the general in a voice and tone unmistakable.

"I have proposed, general, and this morning will verify the acceptance that entitles congratulation. Were it possible I would urge that the marriage take place before returning home, but she is completely prostrated," he said glancing anxiously at the window through which he could see the pale face of the woman he so loved leaning back amid the rich cushions.

"The sooner the better now, Eltham, we cannot hope to keep the affair a secret with the servant's

knowledge of it." He turned to give orders to the coachman and Eltham, entering the imposing family carriage for the first time, leaned over unseen and pressed warm kisses on her beautiful white face.

"My darling, my own wife."

A faint color rose in her cheeks, but she made no response.

General Claremont now entered and they drove rapidly away towards Brightwood.

He looked with much concern at his daughter's face, while relating how her horse nobly found his way home, his presence bearing the news of disaster.

At any other time, Regina would have clapped her hands with numerous expressions of delight at his sagacity, but she lay without a word or sign all the way.

As they reach the house, Macie ran out with a long fur trimmed cloak.

The general alighted; and, leaning over, Eltham whispered:

"Only a few hours more, dearest."

Springing out, he lifted her from the carriage wrapping the cloak around her and leading her into the sumptuous hall of the mansion, standing a few moments in low converse.

With a pressure of the hand, a few parting words of affection, he descended the stairs and at the carriage held a short conversation with the general.

It was arranged that he should return at ten o'clock and the three would repair to the city where the nuptials could be quietly performed, they leaving at once for a tour of the south.

Everything being satisfactorily settled, Eltham bade his adieux and was driven home.

Immediately upon arrival he despatched a confidential servant to bury the dead Nilah and remove the paraphernalia remaining in the form of saddle, crop, etc., then entering the house, jumped into a cold bath, emerging from this vigorous exercise and toilet feeling like a new man.

After a hearty breakfast he visited the stables for business, giving explicit orders which would cover all matters for a month or more, he had a faint idea that they might decide to add a continental trip to the journey before reaching home again. He would like to see familiar faces, visit well-known spots again. Yes, he thought to himself, I want them to see her, how beautiful she is and how proud and happy she has made me. At the house he repeated the same orders:

"In case I should be away," the extent of explanation he offered.

It was nearly nine o'clock. This was his wedding day, not a bit like a wedding, almost compulsory this haste, indeed it was compulsion, her good name would be already sacrificed did the world know it. The world, that will scarcely believe there is such a thing as principle, what right had they to go to this lonely spot in the first place, better be drenched a hundred times than blast a woman's fair name. They should have thought of these possibilities incident to such a risk beforehand, appearances condemn decisively, a fact potent against formality is sufficient. Such an

occurrence would never be forgotten, never cease to be told, with vindictive thrust of doubt and even of aspersion. Christians do this. I use the word as they call themselves and are called such, but they faintly understand and solely disregard the matchless teachings of that One, whose name graces the creeds they so ignobly follow.

But why lament the imperfection of human intelligence and the infirmity of human virtue.

This Eltham thought as he proceeded on his way to Brightwood. Entering the grounds he looked anxiously to see if his bride were waiting, watching for him.

He wanted to see her looking forth and waving a glad welcoming hand as he met her sight, but she was not to be seen.

He scanned the great paned windows from basement to turret in vain for a glimpse of her radiant face, and his heart sank with an almost sickening disappointment. He noticed with a singular misgiving that the blinds were closely drawn, and as he came nearer the whole place seemed enshrouded in an air of sanctimonious seclusion rather than showing opulent joy. Telling his groom not to wait, he stood on the ornamented stone steps and watched him drive slowly away.

On every hand was quiet but immense display of wealth.

Every appointment of the house and grounds perfect.

Down to the left was a deep green meadow gemmed

with purple flowers which looked like crocuses buried in its long grass; beyond was a hill which circled around at one end so as to enclose this little oasis of verdure. In the semi-circle this created, dashed a clear stream in a dazzling sheet of foam. By this little brook scarcely wider at any point than could be easily leaped, had Reggie dreamed her early hopes of freedom and doctrines of equity and justice.

Did he think, all this is the Claremont estate coming to my wife as the legal and only heir? No, he thought but to possess her, no riches but her love.

The general here met him at the door looking much distressed.

"I greatly fear the wedding cannot take place to-day; Reggie is ill."

Eltham started impetuously as if to seek her, then paused and they entered the drawing-room together.

"I think it best to wait a few days until she recovers from the adventures of yesterday, she is very feverish," said the general.

Eltham was dumfounded; he had not dreamed of delay and a superstitious thrill grated across his nerves at the thought of it.

"Why could we not bring a clergyman here?" he asked.

Regina gave a half smile, with a negative shake of the head, saying: "It is not so imperative, what can a day or two matter?"

He sat down beside her.

"Yet last night you said to-day was so far away. But now, to-morrow, or the next day does not seem

to be a perturbing time or distance," he replied with a little irritable fire, and flushing in passionate excitement he turned away.

"Last night," he turned to her as she spoke, "I was not myself, waking terrified from a dream. But now, when in cooler judgment and under circumstances that urge a slight deferring of our marriage, do you think my feelings changed, that I love you less? I love you more, if it were possible, more with every thought of my mind, every throb of my heart, every breath of my life. I say I love you *more*, I cannot love you more, for now I love you *all*."

"Ah, dearest, I did not doubt it, but this delay, don't you feel better now, let us not postpone it."

"I do feel better, much better, but not well. I am more tired than ill, more flushed with joy than fever."

Yes he smiled.

"A pure transparent, pale, yet radiant face,
Like to a lighted alabaster vase."

and leaning over the couch kissed her many times.

"That is why I would wait—to rest. I would come to you, your wife, without lassitude or weariness, fresh as the dew of morning, jubilant with hope, glowing with pleasure, bounding with vigor. I would come to you myself."

And sitting up, she said again: "I am well, but let it be to-morrow."

It was nearly one o'clock.

"You must stay to lunch, Bertrand."

"No, I will leave now. Jesse must drive me home.

I will come early this evening and spend an hour.
Remember, you must rest, will you promise.

“I promise.”

CHAPTER XXII.

Regina awoke at five o'clock from a sound, refreshing sleep, her mind filled with Eltham and the coming wedding.

She would be his wife in a few more hours. At this point in her meditations Macie came running excitedly into the room, her mistress thinking little of her evident flurry for Macie was accorded the freedom one grants a lifetime servant, until she threw herself down in a heap showing a pale and frightened face.

"Oh, Miss Reggie, something is going to happen in this house!" she cried in a trembling voice.

Regina lifted her head from its soft pillow.

"What do you mean, Macie?"

"I've seen a spirit, a ghost!"

"Stop such nonsense this minute, the darkness makes you cowardly. What have you seen? tell me at once." Then as the girl commenced to cry, continued more gently: "What was it, now tell me, Macie!"

There was a banging of a blind just outside the window at this moment and with a shuddering gasp the maid huddled down by the bedside of her mistress.

"Aren't you ashamed, Macie?"

"I am so afraid, so thoroughly frightened," she answered, looking uneasily around.

"Why have you come with your stories to annoy me, this evening of all others?"

A spectre at Brightwood was too infinitely droll, but keeping a serious face, she said: "Well, well, I am listening, Macie."

"I scarcely knew what I was about when I came in."

"You have been in that eerie work-room of yours, no doubt, and heard the floor creak for no apparent cause."

Macie had a little sewing-room in one of the staircase turrets, in an infrequently used and rather lonely wing of the house. This was the one referred to.

"No, I was not there," quickly answered the servant, "I had been to the room and lighted a fire, then thinking you were resting so quietly, the fancy seized me to take a little stroll in the grounds. I was thinking of you as I went along, wondering if we should still live here after"—she paused slightly.

"We shall always live here. Go on."

"Surely no creation of fancy occupied my mind. Down by the bank which separates the garden from the clump of shrubberies to the summer house and entering, I sat down on the stone bench. I was there some time, I could not say how long, may be a half hour, all the time hoping we would not leave Brightwood, which has been my home for so many years, yet also knowing that wherever you went, I should wish to go to,—rising I drew my hood about me to come in. A figure stood beside me, a tall, gray haired

women. She had not walked in nor was she there before, but there she stood now so plain, so close to my side that I could have touched her. Looking directly at me for oh, such a long time it seemed to me, then faded, she did not walk, but melted into air leaving me frozen, staring at nothing. With fingers gripped in the lattice work I kept from falling, and when I could, fled to you. I cannot understand it, but I know it happened, it was a warning and some one will surely die!" then recollecting herself, she threw her arms around Regina crying: "Forgive me, my dear mitsress, I don't know what I am saying!"

"You never saw the face before?"

"Never!"

Regina believed in the presence of entities invisible to the human eye, and under proper conditions visible, yet she wholly disbelieved the maid had seen anything but an image of the brain.

"Well, Macie, go and take a glass of that wine. Here, let me pour it, I know just how much your condition of the nerves requires," and taking the glass decanter from the hand of the girl she poured a goblet to the brim.

Macie drew back.

"Drink every drop of it!"

"But it will intoxicate me."

"No, it won't, it may make you see more ghosts, but you will be prepared and they won't frighten you so much. Now Macie, my girl," she said after a few moments, letting two white feet slip from beneath the clothes onto the thick rug by the bedside,

"how's the grit now, brave as a lion, eh? Then fix me; I want that white silk I wore at the Belford party, and all my diamonds. I would look my best to-night."

When the bell sounded a half hour later, General Claremont looked up in surprise at the vision his daughter presented, then offering her his arm with all the ceremony and exaggerated solemnity of mock formality, he escorted her to the table amidst mutual bursts of laughter, and interchange of merriment.

Dinner over, they enter the drawing-room.

"How will I look, papa?"

"My own Reg, and always beautiful."

Noticing a tone almost of regret in his voice, she said: "You are not going to lose me, papa!"

"You can never be so wholly mine again."

"Now, I won't make use of the old dramatic hackney about gaining a son, but I will say this: you will not lose a daughter, and the chances are, you will gain several grandchildren; so don't you look sad a minute. I would like to try the effect of a veil;" and darting up the stairs, she summoned her maid and together they adjusted a long fleecy bridal veil held by a coronet of diamonds. Then walking daintily down the stairs, she paused at the foot to draw the folds closely around her face, not observing as she did so a tall dark form glide behind one of the arches.

She would sweep before her father with all the dignity of the regulation wedding step pace, her eyes bright as her diamonds which glittered beneath the silken meshes of the costly lace, like a thousand oscillating points of variegated light.

The dark shadow disappearing so suddenly was Eltham's. Finding the door open, he had felt entitled to enter without further courtesy and did so, just in time to see Regnia pause at the foot of the stairs. Then he followed her at safe distance determined to watch her manœuvres enjoying unbeknown to her, some demonstration of what was now going on in that mind, feeling almost sure it was some prank of her humorous side. "He will not surprise me, she thought, I shall hear the bell."

Standing for a second at the double entrance, she then proceeded with a stately air at Lohengrin's march sung in a tra-la-la by her own voice, her father watching her in smiling amusement.

Neither saw the form or sober face of Eltham nearly hidden as he was by the spear shaped stalks of an exotic.

Round and round in front of a large pier glass turning it this way and that, to get a full view and every view of herself.

"Very pretty," she said aloud.

Then with a low bow, "Accept my congratulations, Mrs. Eltham, I forgot, I am not Mrs. Eltham yet."

Then she walked in a straight line and knelt on a little ottoman her back to the door.

"Bertrand Eltham," in a burlesque voice of ministerial probity, "do you take this woman," with great stress on the woman.

"Papa, I think they should say *this* woman, instead of this *woman*—this woman to be your wedded wife, to love, etc, understood?"

"Yes."

And at her attempted imitation of the deep tones of Eltham's voice they both laughed aloud, briefly interrupting the marriage ceremony.

"Regina Helena Es—I wonder if Eltham has a middle name," she said stopping in the midst of her own, "well no matter."

"Regina Helena Estelle Claremont, do you take this man to be your wedded husband—

"Yes I do, and I want him quick!"

And half rising with a broad smile, she looked right into the face of Eltham.

Reaching up her hand to tear off the veil, he seized it almost sternly, and drew her up to her feet, all the time looking straight into her eyes.

Her smile and gayety disappeared under his steady look.

"Is it a farce, Regina?"

"What do you mean?"

"Your laughter and light hearted words and burlesquing, how could you do it? It seems as if it were a comedy to you, a farce, while to me—"

"To you, Eltham, it is more you would say?"

"It is my hope of existence."

"And what do you think it is to me? This childish nonsense was but the freak of a happy heart untrammelled by the folly of superstition. I did not intentionally make light of the ritual, and so far from being a comedy, should aught come to mar the letter and consummation of this marriage, it would be to me a tragedy that would cost me my reason or my life.

I could not live, I would not live were I a conscious being, should we be separated now."

"Ah, Reggie, I sometimes think I do not understand you."

"And how can you, how can we understand another when we cannot understand ourselves. No human heart can fathom the mysteries incident or liable to its own potent structure and fantasy. Tell me, Eltham, how long were you there?" she asked, pointing to the door.

"Only as long as you were here!"

Regina looked for her father; he was gone.

"I am glad your love for me is so serious."

"My love for you is sacred."

"You are not angry?"

"Not very angry."

"You forgive me?"

"I will this time."

"Sure?"

"Sure."

"Kiss me then."

"There."

"I only asked for one," smiling. "Don't you think, Mr. Eltham, it was a little bit mean for you not to let me know you were there?"

"I don't know; do you think it was?"

"Yes, for I might have said or done something I would rather you wouldn't hear or know."

"Would you?"

"I don't say I would, I might; we do not always evince the discretion a lover's surveillance would

insure, I am sure, as it was, I did what I would not had I dreamt you would know it. How foolish and silly I was."

"Well, it is past now."

"I know, but you have made me feel superstitious, ashamed of myself. I feel as if I had done wrong, what might, could happen that would part us?"

"Death."

"Death?"

"Yes, death alone."

Looking earnestly into his face, she asked: "Would that part us?" and after a pause fraught with the solemnity of its very presence, he answered:

"No, that would not part us."

And she knew when he uttered those words, that they were true.

Thinking of Macie's story, her heart for the moment was filled with a chilling foreboding, but shaking it off with a resolute will, asked lightly:

"How do you like your bride?"

"As well as I love my wife."

"Is she as fair as you could wish?"

"Fairer."

"As sweet as you would want?"

"Sweeter."

"As good as you might ask?"

"Better."

"Then she is perfect!"

"My ideal."

"Ask me now?"

"What?"



Would death part us?

"If you are as handsome, noble, gallant, good and true as woman fondly dreams."

"And you would answer?"

"More!"

"Little flatterer!"

"No."

"Little wife."

"I will be your wife to-morrow at this hour."

"Mine forever."

"I have often heard that there is no life without a sorrow, it is not true; I never had a sorrow, and now the blessing of your love makes this life a heaven, a paradise to me."

"May it always do so."

"I know it will."

"What time shall we leave in the morning; what time shall I come?"

"When you like. I wish I did not have to part with you to-night. I wish I had rallied to the event and become your wife this morning."

"That is strange; I urged you so hard then."

"I know you did, but evening increases my ardor for your love."

All this time they had been standing, now he unfastened the veil and it fell like a bank of snow at her feet, picking it up he laid it on a chair, and leading her to a sofa, sat down by her side with his arm about her, feeling as he did so, the gentle rise and fall of the supple muscles of her waist, in natural respiration.

Here was one woman who had kept her physical

education side by side with the mental. There was none of the fainting delicacy, no deficiency in resisting power, here was a woman eligible to wifedom and motherhood who knew what the human form should be and did not take the fashion plate for her standard or model.

Being an athlete and devotee of the art of sculpture, and believing the highest perfection of the human form attainable, he frequently deplored the common haphazard procreation of the race.

She had closed her eyes a moment.

"Are you tired, dear?"

"A little."

"Then I will leave you for the last time," and as he spoke, he took from his vest pocket a ring set with a large brilliant, and placed it on her finger.

Amidst renewed vows they formulated many happy plans, with tender words that only lovers know.

They had said good-night, good-night, a dozen times already, and yet he did not go. It seemed as if he could not. How many times in the sad days after, did he think of this night's parting. Their tenacious clinging to each other as though some evil would befall them in the separation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The morning dawned without a cloud.

Regina had said to her maid the night before:

"Call me at eight in the morning. I want plenty of time."

No cloud or presage of storm or trial, no premonition of ill that is said to influence the sagacity of feminine impression disturbed her, all was serene. Dressed entirely with the exception of her traveling, which was also to be her wedding suit. A light fawn slashed with points of green velvet, a garment though not made for the occasion, never yet worn.

The sound of her father calling her from below arrested her. Coming quickly down, she was made speechless for the moment by the strange look in his face. Opening the door to a little ante-room he entered and, as she followed, closed it tightly behind her.

He held a letter, which shook and rustled in his trembling hand, then as if his fingers had become powerless, it fell from his grasp and fluttered to the floor.

Regina picked it up.

"My daughter, I am going to tell you the truth. I want you to know it, there is no compulsion but should any tale ever reach your ears, not probable,

but from all points I wish you to know all another could tell you, and that from my own lips. The letter tells you nothing."

She glanced at it, the substance of which was simply as follows:

"To General Claremont, Brightwood.

"My Friend:—"I have been ill, am still so, and in view of the past, I call upon you now, knowing you would gladly do all in your power as redress or favor. There can be no redress at this late day, but I would ask a favor. Come to me at once upon the receipt of this, if you are still possessed of the integrity of your youth. This request is made in behalf of my son.

"Yours

"LUELLA."

681 W. 6—— St. City.

"What does it mean, father?"

"As I said, I need not have told you; but I would reveal my life to you, my whole life with no reservation. The fear of your censure has kept me silent many years. I felt that I was masquerading under a garb of righteousness, with a conscience stained in sin, a hypocrite to the one thing on earth dearer to me than life."

He paused, and after an impressive silence his daughter made no effort to break, continued: "This letter tells you nothing, as I said, but its inference of a wrong is unmistakable, I will now tell you from whom it is, and what she has been to me."

With wide eyes of surprise and sorrow, the quiet

listener heard this unexpected tale, a tale whose bitterness and guilt were partly obviated by the keen remorse and deep, heartfelt, repentance of the narrator.

"Some years before I knew your mother, in a town where we were stationed for a time, I met a lady, for she was a lady, whose acquaintance casually formed, developed into a warm confiding friendship, ending in an attachment which would have resulted in marriage but for an insurmountable barrier. Such attention and familiar intercourse continued between a man and woman thus separated, can have but one eventual ending, as we lacked the courage to part, and I must add, I had not the honor to leave her.

"For two years we lived a happy and devoted life. The blood of youth sees not ahead the day of reckoning. She is ill now, would see me once more, it is my duty to go, and I believe my duty to tell you all. Should I not go?"

"Yes, father, go, as you repent your sin and hope to see me live a happy and prosperous life, see that you tempt not fate to inflict a penalty of requital, as a visitant for my father's sin. Is it my dear old father who once did this, the man I have so loved and lauded, he so ready to aid or give, guided by no thought but true benevolence. The sin I have spent my life to combat, or the results of it. And there was—a—child—a son?"

"Yes."

Tears filled her eyes, she had always so deplored the fact of having no brother, often saying that was he one blessing she would have asked in life.

"I will seek him out," she thought, "he is my brother in truth, and shall be in the eyes of the world."

"You will forgive me, Reggie, the deception, the deed?"

"Dear father, you who have been so kind and good, so loving and generous always, I could never condemn you at any cost. But it is not I who should forgive. This is no place for me to speak. Go to her and though late, it may not be too late, make her your wife."

"My darling!"

"That is my forgiveness and dearest wish in this matter."

"You must even show me my duty. I will make her my wife, but I cannot to-day. I will not leave you at this time, your own wedding day."

"Yes, go, she is ill. We do not know how ill. I want justice done this woman, nothing shall interfere with our plans as now arranged. I shall be married to-day, as the past cannot be changed, we can only strive to mould the future right."

"I will go this hour, and when we meet again—"

"When we meet again, I shall be the happiest of wives and will greet yours as I would my own loved and honored mother."

General Claremont could not speak, but drew his daughter to his heart and kissed her cheek and hair.

"God bless and make you happy."

"I am blessed, father, in Eltham's love, and words cannot tell my happiness. If the sins of the father are visited upon the children, yours have not been

in this my generation, and I will hope to guard my children from its blight. Now let us forget it all to-day, this day of honored union and the fulfilled obligation of reunion. To repent a sin and direct our every effort to its full repair, is all the best can do, and all that right and wisdom teaches."

Ten minutes later, General Claremont was on his way, and that with one little fact untold, that could have spared them all the dreadful future.

Watching him from the porch his daughter thought his suffering adequate to his fault, her dear old father, all men might err at some time; how we try to excuse our own. She was to have a mother—brother—for she would find him—a husband. At that point in her thoughts, Macie's story came to her again, a tall gray haired woman—could it be she, before he knew my mother—Yes, it could. Might she become his wife after all these years but to die. A lump rose in her throat, guilty or not, she felt a great pity for this woman—an insurmountable barrier—her father had not said what—had there been no barrier—and they married, would she have existed—is soul the expression of circumstance only. Eltham would have been born the same, of course, as the conditions of their birth and being approached no affinity. He would have loved—not her—for she would have had no existence—but some other—perhaps as dearly—Oh!

"I will not think on what any philosophy may offer, he loves me now, what could have been or might have been is naught."

A second after he drove up, flying to meet him,

he stepped within the door, greeting her as any lover would privately greet his sweetheart on their wedding morn, asking:

"Why so troubled; what's wrong?"

She could not tell him.

"Father has been called away and I am a little disappointed."

"There must be no postponement," he said quickly.

"Not again."

"But you are not dressed," he answered, looking at her morning gown.

"I will be in five minutes. There is no great haste. We must go to see the children before leaving. I will be ready by twelve o'clock. Dr. Hale will expect us; papa sent him word. We can leave for Washington by four or five, does that suit?"

"Yes."

"Come then to see the babies."

On the way he asked again for the hundredth time:

"You love me?"

"I love you!"

"You're happy, perfectly happy?"

"Impossibly happy."

"Thank heaven, we shall not part again. I thought this day would never break."

"A glorious day and world, how sweet it is to live—and love."

They have returned from Glendale. Regina has said good-bye to them all, there amid loving words and tokens of affection and smiling, half serious admonitions to "be good."

About leaving him for final preparation, she stoops and plucks a white chrysanthemum and fastens in his coat.

"Good-bye for five minutes."

"What, to dress?"

"Yes."

"That means twenty-five!"

"You said that exactly like a husband."

"Well, I'm beginning to feel the rights of one."

"Ah, if you never exceed them?"

"It is too late for you to reflect now. I may as well tell you that I shall rule with an iron hand." And as she was starting, snatched her to him with passionate vehemence, saying again, "Hasten, dearest."

Putting her arms up around his neck, she asked: "You will never grow cold?"

"I cannot believe I could."

"So many men do."

"Yes, but have you not thought that wives may carelessly or coolly invite it?"

"How?"

"By turning a careless cheek, or giving a short good-bye, a snappish tone and general air and manner of discontent is not conducive to make a man feel he makes a woman's heaven."

"I believe they don't half try to agree and live in peace."

"I know they don't."

"Oh, I would rather die this moment, now, here, with thy arms about me, so; knowing and feeling the

warm responsive ardor of our love, if I believed we'd ever live to reach

“The bitterness of that first hour
When my lips fail to thrill at my love's kiss;
When my love's love has lost its regnant power.”

“Yes, life would be past for me, for now I cannot live except it be within the sunshine of thy smile, the shelter of thy heart. Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye, a thousand kisses in this one, till next we meet, five minutes hence.”

Then she sprang from his arms and up the stairs.

He watched her mount around the curves and then turned thoughtfully to look from the window.

What was there about him to inspire so mighty a passion. He could not think he deserved it, but he did. A truly noble man is as doubtful of his merit as the truly gifted. They often cannot force themselves, and thereby sink beside the more hardened spirit of less gifted competitors.

Eltham was a man whom the most exalted woman could safely love.

A long stretch of country road could be seen from where he stood, along which he noted indifferently a carriage was slowly coming, yet drawn by animals whose spanking sprightly air purports belief in individual ownership and unstinted care.

They are near the gates and the coachman holds his head and reins at the angle and degree of pressure which indicates a listening to directions from within.

He stops; Heywood comes out, there is a moment's conversation, then the gates open and the carriage proceeds to the house.

A single occupant, a lady who leans back as if greatly fatigued or ill. A stranger, who could she be—some friend of the family of course.

“Company, what will happen next to delay us?”

Henry, answering the ring of the coachman informs him that General Claremont, for whom he has asked, is not at home.

Macie now appeared to see who the visitor was, as Regina had seen the carriage from her window. That the stranger could not continue her journey was certain, and at this assurance the two men take her between them from the carriage. One look at the woman's face and Macie gives a stifled cry and rushes pale with terror up to her mistress' room.

“It is she! the woman in the arbor!” she cried, and fell with a low gasp to the floor.

“Why, she is not a ghost, Macie; why should you be frightened?”

“I cannot tell, I do not wish to see her.”

Regina went hastily down to the drawing-room where the woman lay with closed eyes.

Eltham met her, saying: “Who is this? what does it mean?”

At which the girl replied: “I cannot tell; I do not know her!”

“I will wait in the library,” he returned with a tone of impatience that did not escape her.

“Very well.”

Going to the side of the lounge, Regina raised the woman's head, dismissing the servants as she did so. Richly clad and still a handsome woman with mild

brown eyes, that now unclosed and looked at the girl, giving her a singular thrill as of a former meeting. Those eyes, what was there about them that so stirred her soul.

Removing her bonnet and gloves and loosening the neck of her dress, Regina asked, "You are ill?"

"Very ill. This is the residence of General Claremont?"

"Yes."

"And you—"

"I am his daughter."

The woman closed her eyes with an expression of deep pain.

"And you, are you a friend of my father?"

The woman did not answer for a moment, then replied: "I knew your father years ago," and looking at the girl's face, she realized that Regina knew her story.

Something told her who this woman was at once.

"You know?" she asked.

"My father has told me all."

Alas if he but had, he thought, believed he had disclosed every essential fact.

"You do not despise me?"

"On the contrary, I pity you. We cannot judge another, we should not judge at all. I wish to see your past redeemed, to have your name upon the roll of honored wives sheltered by the one who shared your fault or fall. My wish is also his, and that is why you do not find him here, he has gone to you."

"I feared he might not come or be too late. It is

too late. I shall not live to see the end of day. Too late! I made the mistake of a lifetime which a lifetime cannot repair, our human frailties cannot always be explained. When I wrote that letter to your father it was in the hope that my son should receive his rights—under his protection, and so I felt I could not wait. I have never lost sight of him, and thought I could die without seeing him again after all these years, but I could not. I was on my way—A mother's love—Oh!

Was she dead? she was certainly wandering.

No, she stirred slightly again.

Alarmed, Regina rang the bell.

"Henry, tell Mr. Eltham to come here at once. You will find him in the library."

At the sound of that name the sick woman opened her eyes, a gray pallor passing over her face.

"Mr. Eltham, Bertrand Eltham," repeating the name and looking at the girl.

"It cannot be, yet it must—is it Bertrand Eltham?"

"It is Bertrand Eltham; do you know him?"

A sound between a groan of suffering and cry of joy came from her lips with the words: "I do, I do. Oh, bring him to me quickly!"

Regina insanely felt like giving a demoniac laugh and clutching this woman by the throat, strangle her. There was an awful something forcing a dawning on her brain.

"She has asked for you," and going quickly to the door, closed it behind her, leaving Eltham alone with the woman.

A half suppressed unnatural sound issued from the girl's lips, as she paced up and down the long corridor, how endless the minutes. He had been in there just four minutes. What an eternity! She glanced at the clock again; five. The woman had asked to see him alone. What could she have to say to him? what—the talk had been so disconnected—would that door never open—would he never call her?

Hark! tears and sobs, now a hurried ejaculation from Eltham.

Regina thought the terror that conquered her was not vain. It seemed now as if the man wept. Yes, it was true. Great God! what did it mean? her heart beat furiously as if about to stop, a frightful unspeakable terror seized her, that terror which stops the flow of the blood in our veins, vanquishes courage and paralyzes the quivering soul like a horrible spectre.

The intensity of her feeling must find vent, she could not endure it another second, and darted to the door. But ere she reached it, Eltham, his face wet with tears, beckoned her to enter.

"I must despatch some one for a doctor at once."

But a faint voice from the couch answered: "It is useless, this attack of my heart is fatal. I die, my son—Ah,—Heaven bless you both!"

Another gasp, a parting look and Luella Grayson was dead.

It was not the form there growing rigid in death, that filled Regina Claremont with the terror depicted on her face, but those last words she had said, this woman had said, "*My son!*"



Her Son! Her Son! 'Tis false, a lie, a wicked lie! Oh God! if it were true, you Eltham are my brother!

Throwing her arms around his neck, she cried:

"Merciful God! who was this woman, Eltham, what was she to you?"

"Unknown to me, Reggie," he replied gently, somewhat astonished at her frenzy, "she gave me indisputable proof that she was my own mother. You recollect that I told you foster parents were the only ones—"

He got no further. A look that froze his blood darted from her eyes, a maddening look that stopped the words upon his tongue and quenched his power to reason. A shriek sounded down the corridors, falling upon the ears of its startled inmates sending dire confusion and alarm.

That startling cry which seemed as though it would pierce the air for miles around, bore upon its anguished tone a woman's brilliant reason, carried on its frightful wail a woman's breaking heart.

A blighted youth, a vacant mind and blasted life.

While Eltham heard, yet failed to understand the words.

"Her son! her son! 'Tis false, a lie, a cruel lie! Oh God, if it be true, you Eltham, are my brother!" she sprang from his arms as the unreasoning laugh of madness ended those words, and fell raving to the floor.

Regina Claremont was gone, or that part of her which makes the woman, feeds the soul, and creates our hope and thoughts of life eternal—the mind.

CHAPTER XXIV.

To live and yet to be that creature which wins our deepest commiseration.

A being who feels and acts, but who has lost the power to reflect. A helpless slave to the unconscious diffusions of emotions and fears, when that organ which produces thought and all voluntary action is disturbed by the perverted confusion we call insanity.

That wrench of our natures which sets our faculties all away, when objects change their relative places in the panorama of life, and the world itself has gone back to chaos.

Friends becoming strangers and enemies, and the poor brain haunted by horrors that have no existence.

To become insane means to become in every respect the opposite of one's past self.

The alienation of friends is one of its saddest and most frequent features.

All cases vary, however.

Regina changed little towards any one except her father, his appearance was the signal for the wildest and most violent ravings and cries. She cursed his name and presence, abjuring him in terms of loathing and abhorrence to leave her sight.

Oh, it was sad, sad, this beautiful girl, a helpless maniac raving at that devoted father whose lifetime

thought and hope had been to shield her from all ill. She had been the central point, the point on which all ambition and love had turned, and now, she hated him with the unreasoning hatred of madness. On the other hand, Eltham was her one joy. When out of her sight she would spend the time in tears till his return, lavishing upon him often the tenderest words of endearment.

The servants moved about as though in the hushed quiet of death. The grief that rested upon Brightwood, buried in its sombre cloud the broken spirit of a household.

Now that the first shock had passed, Regina wandered around aimlessly as helplessly, retiring from the sight of all but Eltham. Sometimes entering the drawing-room, she would open the piano, now always closed, and the jangling discord that answered her touch would cause her to steal timidly away as if in fear. Then she would creep back, never out of Macie's sight, who apparently took no notice, always pretending occupation.

Touching at times a note of the organ softly its tremulous tone would seem to cause a gleam of intelligence as though the lost mind were pathetically seeking for expression. The pitiful grief of her old father was simply heart-rending, for the sound of his voice, though he were unseen, would cause the most violent paroxysms of anger to seize her. Words of fury and disgust flowing from her lips in startling profusion; yet his love and watchfulness never wavered in this adversity and sorrow, a punishment he could

not bring himself to think was deserved. Watching her movements from a safe distance, as had grown to be a habit, his heart would thrill with hope, as something would half arrest her attention, then fall to despair as the momentary glance of understanding would give place to an absent and uncomprehending look. At times a low faint quivering voice, totally unlike the one of old, would float out on the air, in a bar or two of some familiar melody, and immediately after, she would answer voices that she said came from the trees and clouds, voices familiar to her entertaining always a thousand vagaries regarding herself.

Why had her father omitted the most important and vital truth. Why had he not said at the time, the barrier was an indissoluble previous marriage, and tell her that the infant product of that ill advised attachment, had been a breathing creature of an hour. That when he saw it, the circumstance brought him to doubly realize his guilt and duty fettering him through awakened sensibilities and the inner workings of conscience, to high resolves which never to this day had been remotely broken.

Yet his one dark sin had after all these years, sent its withering curse of retribution to the core of his heart and pride.

On reaching home that fatal day, and all was disclosed to him, his daughter raving in one room, the dead woman in another, he opened his heart to Eltham, and then learned for the first who the latter really was. And bitter as was that truth to both men, they were sensible enough to waste no words in idle

dissension over an irreparable past, but to combine through the mutual love they bore the daughter, to bury all reference if not remembrance of the galling but unchangeable fact.

True Eltham felt a natural sensitiveness, but his love for the innocent living was far greater than his reverence for the guilty dead. This erratic woman had been his actual mother, it was true, but his real one was she who soothed his infant cry, guarded his toddling footsteps, directed his mental growth, and lavished on him the deep and holy love which time or action cannot change, carrying in its depth the germ of sacrifice, the permanent and abiding spirit that offers vindication and shelter in every time of need. That was his real mother we repeat.

In dying Luella Grayson had said: "You are the son of an honorable man and woman, for such I was at the time of your birth. Failing to agree your father would grant a separation but could not, by the English law, sanction a divorce." A distant and well to do cousin begged her for the child—himself and she yielded to what seemed his best interest. Leaving her native land for America there then followed that period of danger and censurable fault, she could in these last moments but briefly allude to.

She had never lost sight of him, however, and the wish that he should inherit her wealth, and be able to successfully combat with illegal pretenders through the friendship or aid of the influential, had induced her to send the letter to General Claremont, the fear that he might be too late to see her living inspiring

her with courage for the last and fatal journey. Then came the overpowering wish to see him once more. Eltham believed that his mother sinned only in the impetuous folly of youth, and not because predisposed to evil. Little could they have dreamed that through the jumble of imperfect facts, those deeds were destined to fall in mental blight on the innocent. This woman's self condemnation was great, but true to the leaning of her sex she cast no word of reproach upon the partner of her weakness. "He would have made me his if he could have done so, and strange as it may seem to you, considerations of morality alone, influenced us to resolutions of a rigorous life of honor.

"We parted through no dreams of sophistry but honest conviction of right. I sinned, repented and reformed. And when after some years, with his full knowledge of all, I became the wife of Hiram Grayson, I proved a true and loyal one against whom no arrow of disrespect or suspicion could point.

"Your mother dies a faithful widow to the man who entrusted his name and honor to her keeping."

The great riches of this good and frugal man had now by the law of inheritance fallen to Eltham. He was rich, as the fair girl who had loved him with no thought of circumstance, and who could now never be his. Of what value was it all, she was lost to him forever.

Eight months had passed.

And of late Regina had exhibited a feverish hurry as of preparation for some important event. On her face passing a ghostly shimmer that imparted to the

weary hearts around, a slight proof of the workings of organized thought, the sanity of a transient moment. A few days before, her father came up to her and looking at him she asked: "What have you done to me, why should I dislike you. Your face is so kind." But she did not call his name, nor yet cry out in hatred which they believed might be the precursor of a return to reason.

How they prayed in those days only they who too have felt the smiting hand of Providence can know.

Eltham long since sold out at Baisely and now lived entirely with the family at Brightwood. General Claremont loved him as his own flesh and blood. A few days before, walking to the stable, Regina stood a long time patting and talking to her horse and ended by ordering the saddle. As he was led out, Eltham came up and lifting her in his arms like a child placed her on the animal's back. "Shall I lead him?" and smiling down at him she replied, "As you please, dear."

Did she know him, he stroked the thin, white hand now performing the first sane action for eight long months, but she dashed his hopes to earth again by looking up into the trees to answer the voices talking to her all around.

The next day they were sitting on the rustic seat where she sat questioning her heart in such agitation the night they had first met. Looking up at the pigeons whirling around the tower in the ruddy sky, she exclaimed:

"I remember you, I remember something you said to me!"

"What was it, sweetheart?"

"It was not true!

He looked earnestly at her.

* "Try to think; can't you tell me what it was?"

His forehead was wet with the dew of a suffering suspense.

"I will help you to remember, was it that I love you?"

"No, not that."

"Do you know that I love you?"

"Yes, I know, I know," she answered simply.

Then her eyes sparkled all of a sudden with the sharp forbidding gleam of insanity while words that held no meaning even when they passed her lips pressed on in ceaseless flow.

CHAPTER XXV.

Several months later we find our party settled in southern Italy.

The bloom of health is on her cheek the mind no longer a rayless blank.

Eltham and her father felt they could endure any other suffering fate could give, could she be returned to them herself once more, the beautiful Reg of old.

She might yet be Eltham's wife, and he would know the conjugal embrace and endearments which he felt, once given, would solace the grave torture of these long unhappy months.

This morning he thought he should go mad himself with joy. She had called him by name for the first time in full and unexpected recognition. He could not believe it, what did it mean with her restored—perfect happiness, and that is given to no human creature to enjoy.

The night before she could not rest until his head lay beside her on the same pillow. All night he sat or knelt there, his face against hers, Macie in the portierred alcove, and there he reverently prayed. Was that heart appeal answered that she looked in his eyes this morning with no sign of that fatal gleam.

He believed it was and from that moment trusted reverently in his God.

Searching his face with the troubled inquiry of a forgotten past, then her glance fell on the snowy laces at her wrist, the gleaming stone upon her finger, the only and significant gem there, and a deep color came slowly to her cheek as she put her hand to her face as if trying to remember.

That moment her maid appeared.

"What has happened, Macie, everything is changed but you and—"

Then looking at him with such remembrance and love, Eltham forgot the presence of Macie—everything, but that reason had returned and clasped her fondly in his arms, crying:

"You are better, you know me?"

"Better, have I been ill? Of course I know you!"

An hour later they are in the garden where all is buzzing and verdant life.

Sitting on a low bench at his feet, Eltham smooths her hair and cheek, too happy for words.

All the past explained and sealed in silence. The strain was over, his valor and love was to be rewarded. Just one year from the day first set for their marriage, were those fervent vows again exchanged.

Here in the warm Italian sunshine he placed a wreath of white blossoms on her head and in that moment the disaster of the past was forgotten.

To Regina the past year was like a series of uncanny dreams. It seemed as if she had come from another world in which nothing was substance. As her father now walked towards them, she raised her hands as if in sorrowful and forgiving pity, drawing him down

beside them with words given often before this morning of full and free pardon.

Of so quiet a nature was the ceremony to be little preparation was required; and a week later the villagers of L—— watched with their usual curiosity and interest of such events, a small bridal party on its way to church. A tall lovely, dark haired bride with supreme happiness in her face, love in her heart, noble thoughts in her brain, and words of truth and loyalty on her lips.

Regina Claremont.

A taller, dark eyed groom, hair much more gray than when we first met him a year ago. Love; fidelity and honor breathing in his every look and mein.

Bertrand Eltham.

They had begun to live for they had begun to love, life is past when love is dead. And never may we hope for constancy, when we are ourselves inconstant.

Three years, happy, love blessed years have passed, and we will glance once more at the prosperous and enviable inmates of Brightwood before we bid them all good-bye.

It is no longer the happy trio we left in Italy, not one or two but three have been added to the heirs of those grand estates. We might say four, for Holly is now the legally adopted child of Regina and Eltham.

There are two curly haired little fellows, twins, who say "papa" to him without the formality of legislative action and another pinch of humanity whom we just catch pulling her grandfather's hair with all

the impudence and freedom of monopolized affection, and that inextricable tenacity best known or especially identified with the unmeaning yet quite noticeable infantile clutch.

Regina Eltham, beautiful as ever, is the center of all.

No single cloud has marked this happy union, no sorrow mars their wedded life. Across the meadow is a new and magnificent building. It represents on one hand a large portion of the wealth of Hiram Grayson, on the other the philanthropy of Eltham.

During those months of her illness, he had directed the care of them all. What was a cottage with six little ones, has now become a great institution with over two hundred.

The world is growing better, but those little ones multiply, while the trend of all social life seems an ever increasing drift in the direction of systematized monotony. Inside, if we dig far enough down, each heart retains its original quality, but with its inherent fidelity so obliterated that only under extraordinary circumstances dare we betray it.

Formalism is the thing that in society gives men or women no rest or peace till its ruinous purpose of sickening oneness moulds us all to an exact counterpart of each other and leaves us immersed in its solitary dye of all sufficient potency.

Then is its laudable purpose accomplished. Then too have we reached the great sloping plain of humanity's degeneration.

Worthy effort and commendable achievement have no more important or necessary auxiliary than indi-

viduality whose bitterest foe and deadliest enemy is formalism.

To lose originality and become commonplace is the essential fate of the majority who dwell under and follow the laws of the conventional world.

And then that world after doing its all to drive out and kill your individuality complains in disgruntled and malicious truth of the mechanical sameness and inanity of its shallow slaves.

Men and women have become great, stimulated and inspired by the contemplation of excellence. General excellence is impossible under the stunting power of modern formalism and fashion.

If we would be known for resolution or noted for accomplishment, we must not be crippled by restriction or silenced by one set prejudice, or the annihilating evil of the unnecessray and superfluous.

Courage may often be but the stubbornness of an iron frame and a dullness of sensibility, while heroism may exist in all its height and grandeur in the most delicate constitution. Its fullest bloom is from a large and loving heart.

To bide the sneer of our companions by a refusal to do what we believe to be wrong, though they consider it right, to dare to do a generous deed knowing we sacrifice our own safety, are the true tests of the heroic gold within us.

To take the fallen by the hand without the hope of any reward in the form of glorification or a prominent place in the sanctuary of the blessed is one test, to hope for the equality of the world is another.

We seem to have feared the storm when the awakening of political genius stalked against the iron barricade of feudal pride, but to enter a quagmire equally feudal in financial and social despotism.

What is the remedy, is there one?

We believe there is when once its truth is known.

Ever remembering the difference between fanaticism and honest enthusiasm is discovered in their effects, then "seek and ye shall find."

Financial equilibrium only can bring us social equality.

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THE END





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